

THE
SAINT PAULS MAGAZINE.

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THE OWL'S NEST IN THE CITY.

CHAPTER IX.

" Hoping it was but an effect of humour,
Which sometime hath his hour with every man."

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN we reached X Court, St. John did not come in with us as usual ; he excused himself, saying that the horses were so hot he was afraid to leave them standing in the night air ; but I believe the real truth of the matter was that he felt discomposed, without knowing the reason why. On going upstairs we were surprised to find Mr. Earle waiting for us in the sitting-room, and there was a disagreeable look of satisfaction on his face which I could not help fancying boded evil to some one of us. I thought Miss Paton felt this also, for she looked to me pale and uneasy. There were some refreshments on the table, but no one seemed disposed to take any, and a general sense of restraint appeared to hang over us all. After a few moments Miss Paton rose to retire, and Mr. Earle then said : " May I have the pleasure of a few words with you before you go to bed ? "

Miss Paton sat down again, but it was evident that she trembled. Dick and I rose, in order to leave them alone together ; but, before saying good night, Dick poured out a glass of wine and handed it to Miss Paton, who drank it hastily, as if she thought she should require its help to keep up her spirits.

Our bed-room was on the upper story, and we went upstairs together. Without any previous concert, however, but acting under the same impulse, we both paused on the first landing ; and after listening for a few moments, hoping to judge the nature of the interview from the sound of Mr. Earle's tone of voice, and finding we could hear nothing, we seated ourselves on the stairs to wait for the chance of seeing or speaking to Miss Paton again, after he had left her.

One weary hour passed by, and still we sat in silence. At last Dick said, " I don't know what has come to me, Ned : I always used

to laugh at you for thinking ill of my uncle, and for being fanciful and nervous, and yet to-night I feel a sort of foreboding of evil."

"So do I, Dick. I don't believe Mr. Earle ever meddles in anything for good."

Dick sighed. "I ought not to think so," he said, sadly; "you know he got me my commission."

Then followed another long silence, and St. Paul's was chronicleing the loss of another hour, when Mr. Earle at last opened the sitting-room door and went to his own room.

"Now we shall see her face as she crosses the hall," said Dick, softly rising, and leaning over the bannisters.

After another quarter of an hour spent in this expectation, I whispered to Dick, "Let us go down and see; if she is unhappy, I think you can comfort her."

We stole downstairs as cautiously as if we had been committing a sin, and softly opening the sitting-room door, saw Miss Paton still seated at the table, but with her face bowed down upon her hands, and evidently weeping bitterly.

Poor Dick lost all self-command at the sight. In an instant he was on his knees at her feet, and gently taking her hands, he said, "For God's sake, do not cry so! Tell us, only tell us, what is the matter, and what we can do for you."

Miss Paton, though unable to suppress her sobs, let her head sink upon his shoulder, while he, regardless, I think forgetful, of my presence, wiped away her tears, calling her by every tender and endearing name, with the accent and manner of a mother caressing a weeping child. I cannot say I did not suffer at the sight; but there was a depth of love and tenderness in his tone, so far beyond and above the species of emotion excited in my own breast, that I felt ashamed of the ignoble jealousy I could not quite overcome. I determined to leave them together, and go to my own room; but the thought of Mr. Earle's sneer, should he by any chance return and find them thus alone, prevented me. I closed the door softly, and decided to keep watch outside.

It was very long before they came out; and as my lameness rendered standing for any length of time painful to me, I had no resource but to seat myself upon the ground. I reasoned with myself as well as I could, for I knew well enough that I had no right to call my own sensations love, if I compared them with the unbounded devotion I recognized in Dick; and I must have effectually succeeded in subduing my unworthy jealousy, for I soon fell fast asleep.

I was awakened at last by Dick's opening the door. His face was radiant with happiness, and the only trace I could see of Miss Paton's tears was that her bright eyes appeared more brilliant than ever. She seemed annoyed at seeing me there, and hurried into her own room without speaking.

Dick understood in an instant why I had remained outside, and he was full of gratitude for the thought, and of sorrow for my fatigue ; but I was so glad to see him look so happy, that I forgot to be weary almost as completely as I had forgotten to be jealous. Another man might perhaps have suspected me of eaves-dropping, but Dick never suspected wrong or evil in anyone, and perhaps it was for that reason that it crushed him so utterly when it came upon him.

We stole upstairs as quietly as possible, and it was not until our bed-room door was shut that I ventured to speak, and say—

“ You need not tell me what has happened, Dick ; I know it all by your face.”

He threw his arms round my neck and kissed me in his joy, as he had so often done in his sorrow, when a child.

He then briefly related to me the substance of Mr. Earle's communication to Miss Paton. He had handed her a letter to read, which he said he had received from her mother's husband in India, in which the writer absolutely refused to acknowledge Miss Paton as his child, and forbade Mr. Earle ever to write to him on the subject again. Mr. Earle had recommended her to return to Dijon, and offered to pay the expenses of her journey. She having answered that she had rather die than go back, he had coldly suggested that she should endeavour to obtain a situation as governess. He had, however, added that he feared it would be very difficult to obtain one, as she had no one to refer to but himself ; and he could not even promise to recommend her unless she moved into lodgings, as it was impossible he could countenance the extreme impropriety of her manner of life at X Court.

Miss Paton had asked him why he had never objected to it before ; to which he had sneeringly replied that it was not his place to teach female delicacy to a young lady who was not confided to his charge ; and that he spoke of it now because, if she required him to act as her referee, she must certainly adopt a very different line of conduct. On this understanding he had agreed to allow her to remain a week at X Court while he sought to find her a situation. So saying he had left her alone, humiliated by reproofs she dared not resent, and almost crushed to the earth by the knowledge of her poverty and isolation.

Warmly as I congratulated Dick, and fully as I sympathized in the delight he felt in being able, through his affection, to rescue Miss Paton from her painful and precarious position, still I could have found it in my heart to wish that his offer had been made and accepted before she knew the extent of her misfortune. I did not like to think that Dick should be accepted from any mixed or inferior motives ; and with the remembrance of her own account of her conduct towards her mother present to my mind, I had an uneasy doubt whether she was sufficiently disinterested to love him for himself alone. At any rate I wished that the worldly advantages of

the proposal, to one in Miss Paton's position, had not been so evident; but I could see that Dick had no misgivings, and he was too supremely happy to notice any want of enthusiasm in my manner.

We rose earlier than usual on the next morning, for Dick was anxious to speak to his uncle before Miss Paton came to breakfast.

As soon as Mr. Earle entered the sitting-room, therefore, Dick said, "I am sure, uncle, you will agree with me that there can be no impropriety in Miss Paton's remaining here, when I tell you she has consented to become my wife."

Mr. Earle started so violently that it was only by clutching hold of the table that he saved himself from falling. His face turned deadly pale, and he fixed his eyes on Dick with an indescribable look of mingled rage and terror. He made two attempts to speak without being able to articulate a syllable: at last he gasped out, "Your wife!—damn you, what do you mean? Are you mad or drunk?"

"You are, I believe," retorted Dick, indignantly.

"Hush, Dick, he is ill," said I, seeing Mr. Earle stagger as he went towards a chair, upon which he rather fell than seated himself.

"What in Heaven's name is the matter, uncle?" said Dick, somewhat more gently.

I could see that Earle made a violent struggle to recover himself; he even tried to laugh as he answered, "I believe I am not quite well this morning, and your nonsense startled me,—that's all."

"Nonsense?" said Dick, angrily; "I never spoke more in earnest."

"I tell you it is cursed fool's nonsense," said Earle, turning fiercely upon him; "the thing is utterly impossible. The girl shall leave the house this very day."

"She shall not," said Dick, quietly.

"Who is to prevent me from turning her out, pray?"

"I—I will turn you out first: this house is my father's, and——"

"Your *father's*, you damned bastard!" roared Earle; but the words had scarcely passed his lips before Dick had struck him to the ground, and I fear that in that moment of ungovernable passion he would have done him more deadly mischief, had not Miss Paton—who, attracted by the noise of their quarrel, had entered the room unnoticed by them both—sprung forward at great risk to herself, and seized his arm.

Dick's rage yielded to her touch; the fierce flush of passion died away from his cheek and left him very pale. Mr. Earle sprang to his feet, and rushed furiously towards Dick; then, mastering himself by a sudden effort, he ran out of the room, nearly overthrowing the housemaid and old Withers, who were standing trembling in the doorway, and scattering the morning's letters which the former held in her hand.

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calm him better than I could, I advanced to the servants, and trying to make as light of the scene as possible, I said—

"Go upstairs again ; there has been a foolish quarrel, but it is all over now."

"Quarrel ! it's a mercy it wasn't murder," whimpered the housemaid, as she turned away to go upstairs.

Old Withers waited till the girl was gone, and then drawing close to me she whispered, "It's true enough, worse luck ; and if Stephen Earle don't hold his tongue, there will be murder here one of these days, as sure as fate."

"Oh, no ! it is all over, don't be frightened ; I will speak to Mr. Earle myself, and to Dick too," I said, anxious to quiet the poor old woman, who was still shaking like a leaf ; but my own mind was, in fact, too agitated and confused to allow me to decide whether it would be better to speak plainly to Earle on the subject, or to feign to regard the words he had used as the mere unmeaning utterance of passion.

Old Withers slowly took her way upstairs again, and I returned to the sitting-room without having made up my mind as to the best course to pursue.

I picked up the scattered letters as I entered, and noticed that one of them was addressed to Dick, and bore the postmark of the watering-place in Devonshire where James and my uncle were. The handwriting, however, was not known to me.

With a sudden presentiment of fresh sorrow, I took it at once to Dick, who was sitting silent on the sofa, holding Miss Paton's hand in his, and begged him to read it directly.

He opened it hastily, glanced over its contents, and gave it back to me. I saw that he could not speak, and I knew by his face that the worst had happened. The letter was from the mistress of the lodgings my uncle had taken, and was as follows :—

"SIR,—It is my painful duty to inform you that young Mr. Prescott died this morning at seven o'clock. His death was quite easy, but entirely unexpected to his father, and indeed the poor young gentleman said last night that he felt greatly better.

"I shall be obliged if you will either come down yourself or send someone with authority to see after the funeral, for Mr. Prescott does not seem to be in his right mind since his son's death, and he will not allow any of us to go near the corpse or take any steps for its removal.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"E. DANVERS."

The blow was so sudden that at first we sat silent and stunned ;

but at last Dick started up and said, "We must go down to-night, Ned ; I will go at once to Colonel S—— for leave. But," he added, "we cannot leave Mary alone with Mr. Earle ; will you stay with her, Ned ?"

I was very unwilling to stay : it is true poor James was not my brother, but I loved him dearly, and I longed to have one last look. Neither did I feel very eager just then to champion Miss Paton ; so I said,—

"I will go and speak to Mr. Earle first, Dick. I do not believe he meant what he said ; he was so carried away by passion, he did not know what he was doing ; but, of course, I promise to stay with Miss Paton if necessary."

Taking with me Mrs. Danvers's letter, I went to Mr. Earle's room. I really to some extent believed what I said ; that is, I felt convinced that he had never intended to keep the secret of the family disgrace so long, merely to publish it now. That epithet at least was wrong from him by passion, and I had an instinctive feeling that when he had time for reflection he would endeavour to eat his words.

Mr. Earle was walking up and down the room when I went in.

"A great misfortune has fallen upon Dick—upon all of us, sir," I said, putting the letter into his hands.

He appeared much shocked at its contents,—more so than I expected indeed. "Good God, what will become of poor Prescott ?" he said ; and turning from me, he walked to the window, evidently struggling with some strong emotion or agitation, yet it scarcely looked like grief.

"Dick and I both wished to go down to-night, sir, but——"

"But, after what has passed, you are afraid to leave Miss Paton alone, for fear I should turn her out of doors, is that it ?"

"Seeing upon what an errand Dick has to go," I replied, "I think you will hardly refuse to let her stay quietly here, at least till we return."

"You are quite right, Ned," he replied. "I will come and speak to Dick. The fact is, I was wrong. I was not well this morning, and I forgot myself ; but if Dick were not so devilish hot-tempered—however, I will make it all right."

I had succeeded even beyond my hopes, but I could not divest myself now of the idea that the change was too complete—that Mr. Earle was acting a part, in short ; and therefore I said nothing, but followed him into the sitting-room, anxious to see the end. He walked straight up to Dick, who was leaning his head on his hands and looking very sad, and said, "Dick, my man, I was wrong. I got into a passion, and when one is in a passion one says all sorts of foolish things. You were a little rough in your anger, too, but I know you are not one to bear malice ; the fact is—now I am cool—that Miss Paton shall be quite welcome to stay here, not only till your return, but as long as ever she likes."

Dick was quite overwhelmed. Too generous to suspect any artifice or even insincerity in this sudden change, he was filled with penitence for his own violence, and seizing his uncle's hands, with tears in his eyes, he thanked him with an enthusiasm it went to my heart to see. I—who, thanks to old Withers, knew Earle too well to take it all in—was able to notice that he avoided looking Dick in the face as much as possible, and that his whole manner was unnatural and forced.

Satisfied that Miss Paton was secure, our thoughts now reverted to our mournful journey. I retired to my room to pack a few necessities, while Dick, seizing his hat, hurried in search of Colonel S —.

CHAPTER X.

“What a strange thing is man ! and what a stranger
Is woman ! What a whirlwind is her head,
And what a whirlpool full of depth and danger
To all the rest about her ! Whether wed
Or widow, maid or mother, she can change her
Mind like the wind : whatever she has said
Or done, is light to what she'll say or do,”—BYRON.

“And ever since then hath Richard been obscured,
Deprived of honour and inheritance,”—SHAKESPEARE.

As I left the dining-room I was surprised to see Miss Paton come out of her bed-room with her bonnet and shawl on. “Are you going out before Dick comes back ?” I said ; “will you not wait to bid him good-bye ?”

“I have already said good-bye to Cornet Prescott,” she answered, “and I have an appointment with Father Louis ; so now good-bye to you.”

She held out her hand with one of her sweetest smiles, but I could not feel quite in charity with her. Considering the affliction that had fallen upon Dick, I thought she might have stayed at home to cheer him at the last with some words of sympathy. “I wonder whether all Catholics are like that,” said I to myself. “If the priest is of more importance than the lover, I should think the husband would have a poor chance indeed. On the whole, I think I would rather marry a Protestant.”

What little packing I had to do was soon finished ; and as it was impossible to read, I sat down to wait for Dick. But the manifold emotions of the morning, and the terrible thought that poor, gentle, quiet James was gone from us for ever, and that I had never shown him the affection and consideration he deserved, rendered my reflections so painful that the solitude became intolerable to me, and I strolled out to meet Dick. I continued to walk on in a sort of

dream, hardly conscious where I was going, when I was roused from my reverie by the sound of a well-known voice.

Two persons turned out of a by-street and walked on in front of me, in whom, to my utter astonishment, I recognized Miss Paton and the handsome young man whose insolent mode of testifying his admiration had so annoyed me when I formerly accompanied her to chapel. She was leaning on his arm, and talking and laughing as gaily as if there were no such things as sorrow and death in the world. Her bonnet concealed her face from me, but I could see the expression with which her companion's eyes were bent upon her, and I felt angry and indignant for Dick's sake. At no time ought she to have flirted with that impudent stranger, but on that day of all others it appeared to me almost a crime.

I turned back, and retraced my steps to X Court with my mind in a state of great confusion. I began almost to dislike Miss Paton, to regret that Dick had bound himself to her, to long to put him on his guard against loving her too well; then, ignorant and inexperienced as I was, a certain instinct warned me that to speak against the woman of his choice to a man heartily in love is to rivet his chain with the rivet strongest of all in noble natures—chivalry. I turned these things over and over in my own mind, until the remembrance of my dead cousin rose before me as if to reproach me for thinking of Miss Paton's follies or defects at such a time. I was thoroughly wearied out when I reached X Court, where Dick was ready waiting for me.

Scarcely a word passed between us during the journey, and when we approached T—— I forgot Miss Paton and her delinquencies in my anxiety to arrive in time to have one last look at my poor cousin.

The woman of the house seemed much relieved to see us, and she at once conducted us to the room where the corpse lay; informing us that Mr. Prescott had angrily resisted all their attempts to perform the usual sad ceremonies, or place the body in its coffin.

When we went in, my uncle was sitting crouched down upon a low stool on the farther side of the bed. He raised his eyes as we entered, but gave no sign of recognition. He was so changed that I scarcely knew him; unwashed, uncombed, unshorn, and with a vacancy in his gaze that suggested imbecility quite as much as despair.

We both paused at the sight, and spoke to him without receiving any answer. Mrs. Danvers whispered to Dick: "He'll neither speak nor move, sir, unless you go near the corpse."

Dick went up to the bed on the side opposite to that where Mr. Prescott sat, and was stooping over it to kiss his brother's forehead, when my uncle suddenly started up, and pushing him violently away with the air and gesture of a maniac, shrieked out,—

"Get out, you bastard ! you shall not touch him !"

Dick uttered a cry, the like of which I never heard before or since, though the echo of it has never left my heart, and covered his face with his hands. My uncle continued to gesticulate and shake his fist at him with a look of idiotic rage and triumph.

"Uncle !" I said, going up to him and seizing him by the wrist with all the sternness I could muster, "how dare you to speak so to Dick ! Remember," I added, pointing to the corpse, "remember how *he* loved him, and that perhaps he sees you even now."

"Loved him," whimpered my uncle in a childish heartbroken way ; "why his very last words were not for me, I tell you ; they were all of love for Dick."

Dick threw himself on his knees by the side of the bed at these words, and taking his brother's cold hand in both of his, kissed it over and over again in a passion of tears. My uncle looked on in gloomy silence, but made no further opposition. Perceiving that my words had had some effect, I said, "Yes, James loved him dearly, and remember that he, who is now in heaven, will love and pray for you as you deal justly with his beloved brother."

My uncle was now crying like a child, and I took advantage of this unexpected return of softness to lead him from the room. Finding I had acquired an influence over him, I desired him to take some bread and wine which Mrs. Danvers brought in, whispering to me that he had touched nothing since his son's death. After he had drunk a little wine and eaten ravenously of the bread, exhausted nature asserted her rights, and laying his head upon the table he fell into a deep sleep.

Mrs. Danvers seized the opportunity to send her husband and son to put the body into the coffin, which was already in the house, and afterwards took my directions for the funeral.

My uncle did not wake for several hours, and he was then quiet and resigned, and obeyed any suggestion I made with docility. Having learned from Mrs. Danvers that Dick had gone out, I thought it well to go myself with my uncle to the chamber of death, as I feared he might go into a rage at the sight of the coffin. He said nothing, however, though the tears again ran down his cheeks.

"Let him cry, sir," said Mrs. Danvers to me ; "if anything can restore him to his right mind, crying will."

I followed her advice, and allowed his tears to have free course for a time ; then again assuming an air of authority, I desired him to go to bed ; and, to my surprise and satisfaction, he quietly obeyed.

I was eager to join Dick, and, as soon as I felt convinced my uncle was quiet for the night, I hastened down to the sea-shore to look for him. The moon was setting fast, but her last beams enabled me to distinguish a tall figure slowly pacing up and down on a solitary part of the sands. I joined him unseen, and put my hand on his shoulder.

He turned to me with his usual gentleness, but I was chilled by the forlorn and hopeless expression on his face.

Foolishly enough, I began by saying—

“Dick dear, you must not attach any importance to what——”

“Hush, Ned,” he answered, with a look under which all my hopes of further deception vanished, “it is too late to say what you were going to say. If you know nothing more than I do, do not speak of it at all; if you know the truth, tell it me. The time for lies is over: *he* did not lie, standing beside the dead.”

I saw that I must indeed speak the truth myself, or leave him to seek it from those who would tell it less gently; so I answered—

“I do know the truth, Dick; I am ready to tell you all now: if I have kept it back from you, it has been only through love. No wrong done to you by others could make you less dear or noble to me.”

He wrung my hand affectionately in reply, and then said, in a low voice, “Tell me all.”

And then, while we sadly paced the sea-shore, I told him the story as Withers had told it to me, with a painful remembrance of my boyish folly in having once before related a melodramatic version of the sad history to him, with embellishments of my own. I wondered whether he too recollected it. He heard me in silence; the only outward sign of emotion he gave was an occasional thrill or shiver—it seemed to me of suppressed rage—when I spoke of Mr. Earle.

When I had concluded, we continued to walk up and down in silence for some time; at last he said: “Thank you, Ned, for being honest with me: let us go in now, we will talk to-morrow.”

When we returned to the house, Dick, taking his candle from Mrs. Danvers's hands without speaking, went at once to his own room.

“Young Mr. Prescott looks dreadful bad, sir,” said Mrs. Danvers, in a sympathizing voice; “do you think there is anything he could take?” There is a large class of well-meaning persons in this world whose first idea, when they see a fellow-creature stricken by a grievous sorrow, is, “what can he take?”

Mrs. Danvers, however, had, I knew, heard my uncle's words, and I fancied that by thus assuming that Dick was the one most to be consoled with, she hoped to draw me into conversation upon what had passed. I therefore answered, “Oh no, I know his way; there is nothing for it but to leave him alone.”

Mrs. Danvers shook her head with the air of one far from satisfied, but said no more.

During the two dreary days that intervened before the funeral took place, I scarcely ever saw Dick. He generally went out early and wandered about the country during the greater part of the day; and even when he came back, he rarely spoke. Meanwhile my influence over my uncle hourly increased, and I found that by assuming, when necessary, a tone of severity, I could rule him as completely as if he

had been a little child. He ate and drank whenever I desired him to do so, and followed me about the house or on the sands, when I went out to breathe the fresh air, as if he found some comfort or support in my society, though he never spoke. He took not the slightest notice of Dick when he saw him, so that we were at least spared the pain of witnessing any further manifestations of fury or aversion.

We had decided to return to London on the evening of the day fixed for the funeral; but my uncle was seized with an epileptic fit as he stood by the side of the grave, and the prostration of strength that followed was so excessive, that we were obliged to carry him back to our lodgings, and give up all thoughts of travelling for the present.

I urged Dick to return; but he was unwilling to leave me alone with the patient, as my physical weakness and infirmity rendered me very unfit to play the part of nurse. He therefore wrote to Colonel S—, explaining the circumstances, and requesting further leave of absence.

"I shall write to Mary, too, Ned," he said. "I cannot feel that our engagement is binding upon her until she knows who and what she has accepted."

"O, my dear Dick, I hope you will do no such thing," I said, eagerly. "You are in no way obliged to tell her the truth. Whether from early education or from her unfortunate position, she is evidently a little worldly, and——"

Dick looked at me in indignant amazement, "Worldly!" he repeated.

"At any rate," I added, "there is every reason to believe that her position is the same as your own: we know for certain that her supposed father has refused to acknowledge her as his child."

"I am certain you misjudge her character," answered Dick; "and as to her unhappy position, that appears to me a reason why she should meet with a protector absolutely *sans reproche*." Then seeing I was again about to protest, he added, "She has told us the truth as to her position, and it is but just she should know the truth as to mine. If she were worldly, as you think, it would be a still stronger reason for letting her know that I have not a penny in the world except my pay."

I saw that words were useless, yet I would have given anything to persuade Dick not to write. I doubted Miss Paton's disinterestedness, and I dreaded any new sorrow for Dick just at this time. In my heart, however, I felt he was right, and I said no more.

"I will write to Mr. Earle, Dick; it is necessary he should be informed of my uncle's state. The doctor told me this morning that he would regain his bodily health, but that there was no probability that he would ever recover his intellect. As to the rest, there is no occasion for anyone but ourselves and Miss Paton to know anything.

Earle's family pride has kept him silent for more than twenty-three years ; therefore it is very unlikely he will speak out now."

"I do not think he will," said Dick ; "but happen what may, I will never touch a farthing of Mr. Prescott's money, and I intend to save and screw, until I can pay back the price he paid for my commission. My uniform will burn my shoulders until I have done so. Therefore if Mary accept me, she will have to accept a poor man. The name I must keep, for my mother's sake," he added, in a low voice ; "though God knows she would have shown more mother's love if she had strangled me at my birth."

Our two letters were written and despatched the same evening, but six days elapsed without the arrival of any reply for either of us. My uncle gradually recovered his strength, but, as the doctor foretold, he remained perfectly imbecile in mind. He was extremely gentle, compliant, and easy to manage, but he very seldom spoke ; when he did, it was generally to make some childish or futile remark, to which he rarely seemed to require any answer. As soon as he was able to walk about again, Dick and I determined to return to London.

We were to travel at night, and on the morning of the day fixed for our departure, Dick, as usual, went early to the post-office to ask for letters.

I saw by his face, when he returned, that he had found none for himself. He, however, brought one crumpled, dirty-looking letter with him, directed to me ; but the handwriting of the superscription was unknown to both of us.

"What a strange scrawl !" said I ; "it is a wonder it ever reached me. Who can it be from ?"

Dick leaned over my shoulder while I opened it ; the inside was more dirty and more illegible than the outside, and turning to the signature for an explanation of the mystery we saw, to our amazement, that the writer was Mrs. Withers.

With the utmost difficulty, for there were no stops to render the confusion less confounded, we deciphered the old woman's hieroglyphics, and read as follows :—

"Mr. Ned please come back at once and please to break it like to Mr. Dick for the young lady has run away and Miss McGregor is here from Scotland which Stephen Earle could not brazen it out to her and she with the proofs in her pocket so has taken himself off for fear of Dick and we quite alone not being willing to speak to the clerks only Mr. St. John at night thank God but fears she has not gone for any good though please to make the best of it and Miss McGregor says she will put it all into your hands Mr. Ned and never see nor speak to her and I am—

"Yours respectfully

"BETTY WITHERS."

This new catastrophe, and the conviction Mrs. Withers's letter left upon our minds that the worst was still untold, was utterly overwhelming to both of us.

On re-reading the letter, Dick was furious with Mrs. Withers for saying Miss Paton had gone for no good ; and then, for the first time in his life, angry with me, because I could not evince the same unbounded confidence in her that he expressed.

He insisted upon it, that, in spite of his promises, Mr. Earle had attempted to coerce, threaten, or, perhaps, even insult her, and that she had fled from his violence.

"Good God, Ned ! how can you be so unjust as to doubt it ?" he said, snatching up Mrs. Withers's letter ; "don't you see she says he is afraid of me ? Is not that a proof that he has done her some wrong ? What should he have to 'brazen out,' if he had done her no wrong ?"

"True, Dick, true," I said, "of course you must be right."

I could not bear to add to his distress, but for the life of me I could not think what I said. His reasons were plausible ; but something within me whispered that he was mistaken. "Why," I asked myself, "does Miss McGregor declare she will neither see nor speak to her ? Why is she so against her, if there is nothing wrong ?"

The more I pondered on the subject, however, the more clearly I saw the folly of attempting to form any judgment upon so confused and incoherent a document as old Withers's letter, and that there was nothing to be done but to strive to wait with patience until we could speak with Miss McGregor and St. John. But then, St. John ! How, in the name of Heaven, was St. John mixed up in the matter ? At anyrate, I never doubted he was there for some kind purpose, and I felt that, whatever might be the new sorrow in store for Dick, St. John's simple straightforwardness and gentlemanly feeling would render him more valuable at such a time than the most superior talents could have done.

My uncle made no opposition to returning home ; indeed, I had no difficulty in inducing him to do anything I wished. A few moments after we had taken our seats in the coach, for the railway did not extend so far as T— then, and more than one-third of the journey was performed by the coach,—he asked me where we were going.

"We are going home now, uncle, to X Court, you know."

"Yes, yes, to X Court," he answered ; and then added, with an imbecile gravity very painful to see, "it is my intention to take my son James into partnership when I return : he is a most superior young man, and will be a great acquisition to the firm."

I could not answer him ; but he did not appear to want an answer ; he continued rubbing his hands, and smiling softly to himself for a time, and at last, to my great relief, fell asleep.

Even at this distance of time, whenever I think of that weary journey, Dick's white face, compressed lips, and air of forced and

desperate patience, rise before me. There was an expression in his eyes, too, as he sat with knitted brows looking out into the darkness, which I had never seen in them before; and as I looked at him, I could not help feeling that if, indeed, Mr. Earle had done Miss Paton any wrong, it was well for us all that he had, as old Withers phrased it, taken himself off.

CHAPTER XI.

"The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness
And time to speak it in; you rub the sore,
When you should bring the plaister."—SHAKESPEARE.

As we rolled under the dark archway of X Court I remembered the sinking of heart that came over me on the day when I first entered its gloomy precincts in company with Mr. Slack, and I was wondering what new trials awaited us in an abode where indeed I had known little else, when a gleam of comfort shone upon me in the form of St. John's cordial face at the cab door. Even Dick's gloomy brow lighted up for a moment at the sight of him.

While Dick was paying the cabman, St. John whispered to me, "Take Prescott upstairs and let him see Miss McGregor at once, while I keep Dick talking outside: he might say something awkward just at first, you know."

I inferred from this that St. John already knew Dick's history, but fancied that Dick himself was still in ignorance of the truth; there was, however, no time to enter into any explanation just then, so I thought it best to follow his advice, and I at once took my uncle into the sitting-room, leaving St. John and Dick in the hall.

I knew nothing of old maids except the absurd, traditional old maid handed down to us by novel-writers; and naturally enough I had pictured Miss McGregor to myself as a typical representative of that class. Of course she would be everything that was cat-like, angular, and disagreeable.

I was much surprised to see a decidedly handsome, elegant old lady, dressed with no foolish attempt at juvenility, but as became her age, with her grey hair braided under a lace cap, while the sweeping folds of her ample velvet dress gave a certain almost imposing character to her appearance. She rose on our entrance, and, bowing gravely to me, held out her hand kindly to my uncle, who stood transfixed in the centre of the room, gazing upon her with an expression of great astonishment.

"I am afraid you do not remember me, Mr. Prescott," she said: "my name is McGregor; we met in Scotland, more than three-and-twenty years ago."

"Yes, yes, in Scotland, of course in Scotland," answered my

uncle, passing his hand over his forehead with a look of confusion and pain; "pray be seated, madam. My son James is at T—— for the benefit of his health; when he returns he will be glad to make you welcome."

Having said this he seated himself by the fire, and, stretching out his hands to the blaze, relapsed into his usual state of placid indifference to all that passed around him.

Old Withers now brought in some breakfast, and I motioned to her to place some tea and cold meat by my uncle's side. I then desired him to eat and drink, and while he absently obeyed my directions, I said to Miss McGregor, "It will be useless to attempt to make my uncle understand you; he takes no interest in anything now, and is always as you see him."

"Well, to be sure it's a queer world," said old Withers, who had been standing watching my uncle, and slowly shaking her head. "No one can't say but what Stephen Earle was twice as bad as that poor creature there; and yet to see him struck down like that, while t'other gets off scot free;—that don't seem like justice, anyhow."

"It is not for us to question the ways of Providence, Betty Withers," said Miss McGregor, much discomposed at the old woman's impiety.

"It ain't no use to question nothing, as far as I see, worse luck," retorted the old woman, doggedly; and then, after once again shaking her head in the direction of my uncle, she left the room.

"You are Mr. Lovel, I presume?" said Miss McGregor, addressing me.

I bowed.

"Your letter to Mr. Earle had somewhat prepared me as to Mr. Prescott's state," she continued; "but it is far worse than I supposed. I see, therefore, that what I have to say, I must say to you."

"To my cousin Dick, if you please, madam. I will fetch him immediately."

I was going towards the door, but Miss McGregor stopped me.

"To you, if you please, sir:—from what I have heard of the ungovernable violence of that young man, I——"

"Dick is the gentlest creature living!" exclaimed I, indignantly. "I dare say it may have suited Mr. Earle to say otherwise, but it is perfectly false; besides, his position towards Miss Paton gives him a greater right than I."

I was again moving towards the door, when Miss McGregor, earnestly laying her hand upon my arm, said: "For God's sake, hear me out: his position towards her is very different from what you think." Then, lowering her voice to a whisper, she added—

"The misguided young lady whom you have known as Miss Paton, is his sister—Mr. Prescott's legitimate child!"

I was so stunned at this unexpected revelation that I could not answer. For a few moments I could not even think collectedly, for my mind was too full of mingled horror and sorrow on Dick's account; but gradually the extent of Mr. Earle's villany overwhelmed every other idea, and my brain reeled at the thought of what might have been the consequences of his wickedness.

At length, with some remorse at the recollection of my own doubts as to Miss Paton's conduct, I said to Miss McGregor: "This then is the cause of the poor girl's absence? She was quite right to go away just at first; poor Dick!"

"Miss Prescott knows nothing as yet of her relationship to our family," replied Miss McGregor, gravely; "she was already gone when I arrived; and from what Mrs. Withers here tells me," she added, turning to the old woman, who just then entered the room with some cold meat, "there is too much reason to fear she did not go alone."

"Good God, Withers! is that true?"

"True enough, sir, worse luck; our errand-boy carried her luggage, and he says she was met at the station by a mighty fine young gentleman."

I remembered the impertinent young stranger at the Catholic chapel, and my heart sank within me.

At this moment St. John came in, looking much disturbed. "It is no use, madam," he said, addressing Miss McGregor apologetically; "he has got it all out of me."

"So now there will be more mischief, I suppose," said old Withers.

"Really, Captain St. John, this is most indiscreet," said Miss McGregor; "you promised me you would not tell him the worst just at first."

"Well, I know I did," said St. John, pettishly; "but what is the use of trying to keep a thing back from a fellow who appeals to your honour and all that? and then nothing would do but he must leave the house, so that I might run at once and bring her back. How could I help letting out that I did not know where she was? and after that—you know, Ned, how quick he is—of course he saw that I had not told him all; and how can you go on telling lies to a fellow that almost makes you cry; damn it, I say it can't be done."

And poor St. John abruptly turned his back to hide the tears that were running down his cheeks, in apt illustration of Dick's having almost made him cry.

"Indeed, madam," I said, addressing Miss McGregor, "it is not to be expected Dick should rest quiet till he has found her, and, if possible, saved her from the consequences of her own folly. It is not in his nature to rest quiet when he sees anyone wronged, and he is sure to persuade himself that she has been deceived and wronged in this matter."

"Wronged she has been, grievously wronged," said Miss McGregor, "but only by her uncle, and of that she knows nothing. Her going away proves she is as lost to all female dignity as——"

"Hush!" interrupted old Withers, "here's Dick."

Miss McGregor started, and looked towards the door with an expression of both fear and dislike. It was evident that Mr. Earle's report of Dick's violence, combined with her own prejudice against him on account of his birth, caused her to expect something quite different from the reality, and a remarkable change passed over her face when he came in.

Dick had—as I have said—acquired an unusual gentleness of bearing, through a long habit of protection and tenderness towards me, and even his excessive paleness at this moment—the result, no doubt, of deep suffering and the instinctive effort all Englishmen make to suppress the outward show of emotion—gave a degree of dignity to his appearance which contrasted forcibly with the attitude of the high-born St. John, who, seated on the arm of the old black sofa, had fallen back upon his old resource of sucking his stick, while his legs were dangling in a far from imposing manner.

"How can I thank you, dear madam?" said Dick to Miss McGregor. "St. John has told me how nobly you have befriended my sister for my poor mother's sake."

Miss McGregor blushed deeply, and her blush was so becoming that I thought she looked ten years younger. "I wish you had better reason to be thankful to me," she replied; "but until I came here with your mother's last will in my possession I knew nothing of any previous will in your uncle's favour, and I was therefore quite unprepared for his opposition, and for the fury he displayed when he saw that I was determined to execute the charge imposed upon me. Moreover, the providential arrival of Captain St. John saved me from all personal risk."

"Oh, it's very well to make light of it now," said St. John, jumping off the sofa; "I am sure there are very few ladies would have shown such pluck. Earle was like a madman broken loose."

"We must not forget that in the first instance it was *he* who was wronged. He was the eldest, the only son, and he had every right to consider the property his own; indeed, it was only through some flaw in the entail that the squire was able to sell it, and even after it came into the family again, old Squire Earle promised to leave it to him, and broke his word. I do not justify Mr. Earle, but these facts are at least some excuse for his conduct. In his defence, written for me, he declares that he had been driven by the falsehood and injustice of others, to regain by stratagem what he, as the eldest son, believed to be rightfully his own."

"Stratagem!" said Dick; "the ruin of his sister's innocent child!"

"That's a very comfortable doctrine for elder sons," said St. John ; "but I'm only a younger son, and I don't seem to see it."

"But you have not told us, madam, how it was that you had it in your power to defeat him," said I.

"To make that clear I must go back to what happened a long while ago, and I feel uneasy at speaking of those times in *his* presence," she answered, glancing at Mr. Prescott, whose eyes were again fixed upon her with an expression of painful bewilderment that suggested the idea that he was trying to recall where and when he had seen her before.

"Uncle," said I, going up to him, "you had better go into your own room, now. You have your pipe there, you know, and all your books and papers."

"Yes, yes," he answered, rising, "we must never neglect business, Ned: it is my intention to take my son James into partnership as soon as he returns," he added, smiling serenely upon us; "he is a most superior young man, and will be a great acquisition to the firm."

Miss McGregor tried hard to smile upon him in return, but it was evident that she shuddered.

I established my uncle in his easy chair by the side of the fire in his own room, lighted his pipe for him, and after waiting a few minutes, to see that he was quite quiet and contented, I returned to the sitting room. Miss McGregor had in the meantime sent Mrs. Withers upstairs for some fresh tea, and by gentle force she compelled Dick to take some breakfast, while St. John attacked the cold meat with a will.

Miss McGregor stood by the fireplace looking at Dick for some time, and then said to me in a low voice, "He is certainly very different from the savage Mr. Earle described. I am quite surprised at his appearance and manners. I assure you I consider him a most prepossessing young man."

"Of course you do," said I; "everybody loves Dick."

When breakfast was over, Miss McGregor explained what little still remained obscure in the sad story of which we already knew the main facts.

It appeared that a short time before Mrs. Prescott forsook her home for the second time, she had written a letter to Miss McGregor telling her that her misery was so great she had no resource but suicide or flight, and imploring her to receive and protect her.

Miss McGregor, belonging, as she undoubtedly did, to that class of strictly conscientious, unbending women,—unfortunately too numerous—who contrive to render the grander virtues odious by the lack of the smaller and softer ones, wrote a letter of *hard* religion in reply,—reminding Mrs. Prescott that her present unhappiness was probably sent in mercy, in order to enable her to expiate the error of her girlhood; telling her that she could never countenance a mother in for-

saking her duty to her children, and utterly refusing to receive her into her house.

Certain crises of wretchedness sometimes occur in our human life, during which to preach duty is a species of blasphemy against the holy idea itself. It is like seizing the moment when the ignorant savage crouches before some convulsion of nature, which he attributes to the anger of his Fetish, to speak to him of a God of peace and love. Had Miss McGregor only been one of those simple, unreasoning "good souls" who instinctively open their dear motherly arms to the wretched,—who can say but that her unquestioning pity might have wakened some untouched chord of tenderness in Mrs. Prescott's heart, and thus gradually and unconsciously recalled her to duty through love?

I am afraid many of us reason, when it would be truer wisdom to feel.

From the time when she was brought back after her first flight from her husband, Mrs. Prescott had been kept a close prisoner in her own house. The Grange was let, and Mr. Prescott, who received the rent, was very careful no longer to trust her with any money. In her desperation she applied to her brother Stephen to save her, declaring herself ready to make any sacrifice in order to live unmolested by her husband for the remainder of her life. Stephen, speculating upon her despair, had profited by her utter ignorance of the world, to persuade her that the only effectual means of escape from her husband's pursuit, would be to pass for dead. Upon this condition he agreed to arrange her flight; having first induced her to execute a will in his favour, in order, as he said, to enable him to receive the rents of her property and forward it to her for her support.

This document once in his possession, Stephen had encouraged her morbid leaning towards Catholicism, and placed her in the care of a Catholic priest, who had instructions to find her a safe asylum in Italy, and, after a few months, to forward a letter to Mr. Prescott announcing his wife's death. No doubt the priest was well paid for his trouble, for the documents forwarded to Mr. Prescott had every appearance of authenticity, and the deception was completely successful.

Mrs. Prescott shortly afterwards gave birth to a daughter, whom in the fervour of newly converted zeal, she determined to consecrate as the spouse of Christ. By the advice of her confessor—a Frenchman—she then left Italy and retired to the *Convent des Augustines* at Dijon, where she intended her daughter to take the veil.

However, the energy of her daughter's determination to the contrary, triumphed over her own weak and vacillating nature, and aware that she had not long to live, Mrs. Prescott wrote to her husband, imploring his forgiveness for the deception she had prac-

tised upon him, and entreating his protection for his daughter, whom she had decided to send to England.

This was the mysterious letter with the black seal which I had seen Mr. Earle intercept. He answered it immediately, declaring that he wrote by his brother-in-law's desire, saying that Mr. Prescott absolutely refused to acknowledge his wife's daughter as his child, forbade her to send her to England, and solemnly declared that he would never forgive her.

Mrs. Prescott, though at first almost crushed by this reply, yet clung to the hope that if her husband could only see his daughter, his heart would be softened by her beauty and grace. She therefore persisted in her determination to send her to England. Much delay was caused by Mary Prescott's refusal to return to Dijon, and Mrs. Prescott's confessor—the Père Joseph, of whom her daughter had spoken so lightly, but who appears to have been an honest, sensible man—perceiving that her health was failing fast, advised her to execute a will leaving her property to her daughter, in order to secure her an independent and honourable existence, should Mr. Prescott persist in his refusal to acknowledge her. More worldly wise than his *penitente*, he recommended that this will should be entrusted to the care of some person in no way interested in the disposal of Mrs. Prescott's property, and Mrs. Prescott had sent it with a long explanatory letter to Miss McGregor, rightly judging that that lady would regard the execution of her dying request as a sacred duty. Miss Paton (I should say Mary Prescott) had told us that her mother died without confiding to her the name of the lady to whom she had entrusted her will.

Miss McGregor waited a few months without taking any step in the matter, as Mrs. Prescott had written that she should instruct her daughter to communicate with her as soon as she arrived in England. She at last wrote to the Lady-Superior of the *Convent des Augustines* to inquire what had become of Miss Prescott. The Superior, who had known both mother and daughter under the name of Paton, replied that no such person had ever been at the *Convent des Augustines*, nor was it until two months afterwards that she accidentally mentioned the circumstance to Père Joseph, who had been absent from Dijon at the time. Fortunately, however, Miss McGregor's letter had not been destroyed, and the worthy priest no sooner had her address, than he wrote her a long, wordy epistle of five closely-written pages, very valuable as documentary evidence of Mary's identity, and informing Miss McGregor of her departure for England nearly six months before.

Miss McGregor at once decided to go to London to communicate with Mr. Prescott, place the letters and will in his hands, and doubtless give him a severe lecture on his duty to his child.

Had she seen Mr. Earle first, her object might even then have been

defeated, but she arrived on the very day of Miss Paton's flight, and Earle, who had really some reason to be uneasy at the idea that Dick would attribute it to him, had gone to the railway station to which the office errand-boy had accompanied the fugitive, in the hope of obtaining some information.

A few words with Mrs. Withers were sufficient to convince Miss McGregor that Mary Prescott and Miss Paton were one and the same person. "The only wonder was," said old Withers, "how me and Prescott never found it all out, for Lord knows she was her mother's very image; and, bless you, didn't Prescott take her for poor Mary's ghost, and faint away as soon as ever he set eyes upon her?"

No sooner did Mr. Earle return, than Miss McGregor sternly upbraided him with his conduct to his niece. He at first denied the whole thing, declaring it a mere drunken fancy of old Betty Withers; but upon Miss McGregor rashly informing him that lies were useless, as she had the priest's letter and Mrs. Prescott's last will in her pocket, he lost all self-command, and rushed forward to take them from her by force. A struggle ensued, in which Miss McGregor, notwithstanding her courage, must inevitably have been overcome, had not Mrs. Withers, who was rushing out to call some of the clerks, encountered St. John coming upstairs to inquire after Dick; and seizing hold of the astounded young officer, dragged him into the sitting-room, crying out, "Help her, help her, or he'll murder her out and out."

St. John, comprehending nothing, and seeing nothing, beyond the fact that a woman was before him succumbing under a man's brutal violence, flung himself upon Earle, and bringing to bear the triple advantage of youth, strength, and indignation, belaboured him so vigorously as to quickly succeed in disengaging him from Miss McGregor, and concentrating all his fury on his unexpected assailant. Earle, however, was both the larger and stronger man of the two, and poor St. John would probably have paid dear for his championship, had not old Withers's clamours brought up half-a-dozen of the clerks.

At the sight of his subordinates Earle abruptly desisted; and with as much dignity as he could assume in his breathless condition, told them he was really surprised they could be such fools as to pay attention to that drunken old witch's folly; that he and Captain St. John had merely been amusing themselves with a wrestling match, and that he would trouble them to return to their occupations downstairs.

The clerks, who were all afraid of him, looked dubiously at the panting St. John, who was wiping his face with the air of one who has, at least, found the wrestling match not at all to his taste, and then at Miss McGregor, who, as white as a sheet, but as calm as Juno, thanked them for their kindness in coming, but added: "I believe all

danger is over ; but should this silly quarrel be renewed, I will send Mrs. Withers (who is *not* intoxicated) to beg your assistance."

The men retired, and Mr. Earle, quickly coming to his senses, implored Miss McGregor to forget his unmanly conduct, which he assured her was the result of the terror he felt at the idea that on Dick's arrival she would place the documents in his possession. He then drew such a picture of Dick's violence, of his having very lately knocked him down and nearly killed him for a mere hasty word, that Miss McGregor was already somewhat shaken, when the effect was unconsciously heightened by Mrs. Withers. She had been out of the room to fetch some brandy, which she vainly pressed upon the indignant St. John, who though, in fact, terribly bruised and knocked about, gallantly persisted in declaring there was nothing the matter with him, he was "only a little blown."

The old woman had been roused from her usual sullen indifference of manner, by Mr Earle's insulting expressions, and she now went up to him, almost fiercely, and shaking her broom in his face, said,—

"Drunken old witch, am I, Stephen Earle ! Ah ! Dick will be home soon, and I hope he'll murder you outright this time, I do."

"For shame, Betty Withers !" said Miss McGregor ; "go away ; I am not afraid to be left while this gentleman is here. May I hope, sir," she continued, addressing St. John, "that you will kindly stay with me until I have found some respectable apartments in this neighbourhood ? It is of the utmost importance I should see Mr. Prescott immediately on his return."

"I will relieve you of my presence," said Earle to Miss McGregor. "I will leave the house in order that you may remain in it undisturbed. In the course of the evening, madam, you will receive a letter from me, which will, I hope, cause you to take a different view of my conduct in this unhappy affair."

Miss McGregor bowed, and St. John laughed insultingly. In the course of the evening she received the elaborately written "defence" of which she had spoken.

(To be continued.)

WINTER DRIFT.

Musings in season are going out of fashion. We no longer hail the Spring with an essay or an ode, and Summer comes and Autumn wanes without any didactic reflections on the flower in bloom or on the fall of the leaf. The uncertainty of the climate does not altogether account for this fact, although it has something to do with it, no doubt. We cannot depend on what used to be termed the vernal airs, the zephyrs arriving with the swallows; and the minstrel who tries to celebrate the smiles and tears of the traditional April finds himself like the butterfly caught in the east wind. The bard used to be a prophet, and still wishes to be so far right in his reckoning that he will not seem to be singing of the weather in another planet. Meteorological changes have thus a curious action upon specific forms of literature. The spots upon the sun's face, the course and temperature of the Gulf Stream, the cutting down of woods and forests; all these things, inasmuch as they are supposed to influence our rain-fall, snow-fall, and fog-veils, also touch the sphere of *belles lettres*, in which records of the aspects of nature were transferred into verses of celebration. Spring comes to us in a questionable shape, and we hesitate whether, instead of figuring as a young lady in light garments, she should not be muffled in a warm coat from chin to heels. Winter lingering chills the lap of May, and perhaps returns even to nip blue with a frost the nose of that merrie merrie month. The Derby has been run in a sleet storm, and the very fires of August, burning in the braziers of the poppies at the edge of the corn, have been curdled into mere grey leaves by an icy breath blown over the fields when they should have been wrapped in the warm gloom of a dew-raining summer night. It would seem as if of late years there was another falling out between Oberon and Titania.

"Therefore, the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic fevers do abound :
And thorough this distemperature, we see
The seasons alter : hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose ;
And on old Hiem's thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set : the spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries ; and the 'mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which."

We have had our green Yule tide, and seen Easter in a shroud. I myself have picked up a primrose in December hiding shyly under a bank of moss. It had, however, a "pale, unmarried look," and did not survive an hour after being plucked from its retreat.

Perhaps a time will come when snow will be as strange and novel a sight to us as it is to a native of Central Africa, and skates be as unfamiliar objects in London as in Bombay. And yet our winters can surprise us occasionally by reviving the traditional characteristics. It is only the oracle who speaks through an astrological almanac who can venture to predict the weather now, and the mysterious calendars, compiled by the wizards, are no more to be trusted than the glimpses into the future which are afforded to the people who cross the palm of a racecourse gipsy with silver. For instance, if I say Christmas will appear jaundiced in a yellow fog, or wet as a water-god, lo ! the month is everything that a plum-pudding artist could desire ! The streets are muffled in white ; cabmen toss their arms about like windmills for warmth ; the baked potato-man drives a roaring trade ; and an old picture in the *Illustrated London News* is suddenly realized. On the other hand, if I draw visions, say of November, as it used to be, of town in brown-Holland, I will be treated to a little practical irony on the part of our climate, and the atmosphere will remain bright and sunny until no Frenchman in Leicester Square believes we have any reason for throwing ourselves off bridges. Nothing is certain, we are told, but the unforeseen, and nothing is sure about the weather, except that it will not turn out as we think. We ought, therefore, to hope for the worst.

What will winter be, from a social and literary point of view, when coals have got so dear that we must either substitute stoves or hot water pipes for grates, or go about with a portable pannikin of heat to warm our hands. The fire and the fire-grate are essentially British institutions. Cowper says of winter—

"I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness."

For fire-side, read "stove-side," and what an alteration there is in the picture suggested by the couplet ! The hearth-rug is no longer the consecrated centre of the domestic circle. We shall not any more see faces in the fuel, and dream dreams as the black diamonds sputter and crackle into odd fantastic shapes before resolving into ashes. The word *ingle-nook* will lose its meaning. Our romances written for English evenings spent within sight of the sea coal will be changed, we may be sure, when we are compelled to sit down to read them before a black box invented for the economical production of caloric. Would Wordsworth enjoy this situation, seasoning his personal talk with heavenly Una, or the gentle lady married to the Moor ? Of course, with the fire, we should miss the roaring of the

tempest in the chimney. The stove would be about as interesting as a warming-pan or a gasometer. There is something repulsive and practical about it. And yet when an over-indulgence in Silkstone or Wallsend spells bankruptcy, what are we to do?

I am myself a fire-worshipper, more ardent than any Persian who kneels or salaams to the day-god. I can people my bachelor hearth at any time beside Allhallow-eves with fairy-forms and old fancies, and sit for hours in reveries, with no other light in the room than the flame flaps from the fuel. The demon of diminutive proportions, which the old alchymist found in the centre of the furnace, in the shape, as well as I remember, of a ruddy mannikin, with a jaunty tail, who pirouetted amongst the glowing embers, was by no means a misanthropic goblin. He was, I have no doubt, a tricky but harmless sprite. It is this facetious Salamander who makes the whole room blink, then darken, then flash from the gloom at you once more, until the pictures on the wall come and vanish, and come again; until they seem to assume a weird and phantom character when they do present themselves. If you wish to be memory-haunted, sit alone of a winter evening before a fire, with no lamp, no light but what the coal gives. The years fall from you, the years of weariness and task work, and you are with the ghosts of the past, thinking more of them and better of them than ever you did when that past was your present. Gillian's dead, God rest her bier! What fair spectre is this, kneeling as Gillian used, next your chair? What music is this being played, far within echoing soul-chambers you might have thought deserted (never visited by you, except when your eyes are closed in sleep), music of no subtle value in design, but full now of sweet pain and sweet regret, longings to say what can never be said, full also of fond and tender conceits which can never be spoken to the only ear you would care to whisper into vows of homage and devotion for ever! Gillian's dead, God rest her bier! *Her* name was not Gillian, and you are conning over a line in a ballad; and the piano is dumb, though its mouth is open, and its keys gleam like a row of white fangs in the pulsing light and shade from the fire.

It occurs to you, that, after all, if stoves were universal, patent stoves not requiring poker, wife-beating would be more uncommon in England than it is at present.

How telling winter is on the stage! Nothing in the way of theatrical property looks more like the real thing than theatrical snow, and I might add, the shivering of actors, who like poor Tom are a-cold. Your teeth chatter sympathetically in the stalls, when a frozen-out hero "blows his nail" and shakes the chill particles of white paper from his coat. We cannot get rid of the delusion even when the iced-melodrama is over, and the ballet in gauze and millinery for the torrid zone is turned on. An idea haunts

us during the quadrille of sylphs around the rose-budding pole that the weather is still as it was a quarter of an hour before. The storms also (winter equinoxes, doubtless), the tempests of the play-houses, are always effectual.

"In such a night
To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure:
In such a night as this!"

(LEAR *loquitur* on a heath before a hovel.)

The sense of fancied desolation, and at the same moment the consciousness of being snugly under cover, sheltered, while the fond foolish monarch is exposed (and still is not exposed) to the pitiless pelting of the rain and chiding of the wind, awakens a feeling of interest, concern, and enjoyment in the dullest play-frequenter who brings an imagination at all to the pit or the boxes with him.

Winter, it is admitted, is the very forcing-season of benevolence. Then it is that the genuine descendants of my Lady Bountiful collect blankets for the poor of the parish, keep on tap whole boilers full of soup for the indigent, and endeavour to postpone the application of Hodge for admittance into that charitable Bridewell, the Union. Hodge, I am sorry to say, has been known to swallow his blanket like a boa-constrictor, or rather *not* like a serpent, but in a fashion far more round-about than even the way of a reptile with its victims. He pawns his blanket and drinks the proceeds, discounting whole nights of warmth in the rug for the temporary heat procured out of gin-drums and beer-pots. But let us not be backward in subscribing to the village relief fund, or the manor-house or rectory relief fund, because there are a few black sheep (with rheumatism) in the neighbourhood. If it was easy, according to Rebecca Sharp, to be virtuous on a large income, it is not difficult, perhaps, to be temperate on strong meats and satisfying wines. Hodge in desperation may, when out of work, and out of health, be sorely tempted. The crimson curtains and the canticles of boors in chorus are too much for him as he skulks by the "Blue Lion" of a Saturday night. Once inside its portals he can purchase happiness for a shilling. 'Tis then with him, Let back and side go bare, go bare, or Let wife and child go bare, go bare, 'tis equal! Lock up the brute, of course! Who is to blame if *he* goes upon the parish, or is visited with delirium tremens, or falls to poaching and into evil courses generally? The question admits only of one answer from any properly regulated mind, and the society in which you and I, dear reader, move is naturally prepared to pronounce that obvious judgment. Let us give Belisarius—the "parralized" sergeant—a cold shoulder. The winter misery of picturesque vagrancy is, I believe, being put down or hidden or

frightened off the streets. We make war upon the beggars through Mendicity Associations. This is as it should be. There is no room in England for the gaberlunzie, and the successors of Ochiltree have nothing in common with the bedesman of romance. The gaunt artist in famine, who absolutely performs a kind of death-rattle upon a door-step, is an impostor no doubt, who canters home at nightfall, his pockets filled with coppers charmed from the thin purses of milliner girls, to indulge in stout and steaks. The sailor with one leg lost in the service of his country at a sea-fight, which must have taken place before he was born, is a shallow knave, and so with the rest—the sham-epileptic, the coloured chalk Raphael of the flags, who can really draw a mackerel as close to nature as several of the fishes in the cartoon of the Miraculous Draught; the acrobat, who astonishes the crowd by what old Laneham calls his “goings, turnings, tumbings, castings, hops, jumps, leaps, skips, springs, gambauds, somersaults, caputtings, and flights forward, backward, sideways, downwards, upwards, and with sundry windings, gyrings, and circumflections.” The mountebank as well as the mendicant is doomed. Fun is condemned at the fair, and the Home Secretary has been down upon the Learned Pig. Of course the march of progress must not be impeded. The high road of civilization must be cleared of show-booths, jongleurs, drones, and ragamuffins. A spectre caravan, more singular than Freiligrath has imagined flowing over the desert in the moonlight might be conceived, composed of the banished giants, skeletons, dwarfs, contortionists, five-legged sheep (in a flock!), and other *bouches inutiles* flitting or hovering round the Epsom Downs, which in a few years will be purged of all illegitimate rascality. Play up the Funeral March of the Marionette!—

“Coat of motley, cap and bells,
Over his bier shall dolefully jingle;
Conjurors all shall bear his pall
And mountebanks follow it, married and single!

Harlequin droll, thy bell shall toll,
Master Punch shall shrive and bury him;
Tumblers grin while they shove him in,
And Charon send Joe Grim-(aldi) to ferry him!”

And Doctor Marigold must vanish. In my winter evenings' ramble, I often stop before the doctor's naphtha lamp and listen to his wonderfully voluble patter. He contributes to the joyousness of the streets. His garrulous tongue soon attracts a ring of spectators, who are being gradually dissolved into customers by his melting eloquence. The joyousness of the streets on a winter's evening! The rumbling bass of the omnibus procession gathering up freights of homeward-bound passengers; the general surge of the now darkened sea of life in the

vast city ; the blazing shops, bonnets in one, beef in another, and behind a row of bottles of preserved sunset in a third, medicine for the million ; for every heart-beat of yours, faces start at you at moments so pallid and distorted by a gas glare that they seem to have a gibbering aspect you cannot get rid of the recollection of until you have turned into a bay where the houses are as still as pines in a windless grove, and through which a policeman is endeavouring to coax to a cell a prisoner in a velvet jacket and gay ribbons. This prisoner represents an interesting difficulty to the historian of European morals, but to a constable she is a common occurrence enough. If he halts while his captive bids him defiance in a laugh as harsh as the shriek of a jay, he may pause to decide whether he will be obliged to signal for a stretcher. He has nothing to do with casuistry or sentiment. He is reserved by fate, pre-ordained to discharge executive functions.

You have wandered as far as Chelsea Bridge. The moon shines on the glimmering river, the water seems almost phosphorescent in the silver-green light. Not a sound, not a stir breaks the stillness of the hour. So clear is the air that the stars do not, as they sometimes do, seem all fastened on a dark blue screen ; but they stand out, as it were, in their places, and they seem farther off than ever. Music of the spheres ! A church clock (High—the church is, curates or priests not only in vestments, but in beards) strikes eleven, but the sidereal harmonies do not break in upon the chime. It is not given to all of us to hear as much as either Pythagoras or the Reverend Edward Young. Again, before the fire, this time thinking of the ships in the Channel, for there is a storm abroad. How dark and cold it must be in such a night as this driving through the sleet, and yet you may be sure that the man who makes adulterated life-belts can eat his buttered muffin with a good conscience ! *Caveat emptor*. Selling things under false appearances is only, according to a statesman, a special form of competition. But sailors need not fear falling slates. Mr. Bernard Buntline and Mr. William Bowline are talking a sort of briny eclogue while the stiff nor'-wester screams through the cordage. "Lord help 'em ! how I pities all unhappy folks on shore now !" exclaims the pious Buntline. This is quite a common sentiment in the colliery merchant service, when the yawning brigantine has tried to hold by her rotten cable and is drifting on a lee shore.

Keats tells us that the poetry of earth is never dead, and that when the world is steeped in the sultry silence of a hot noontide, the grasshopper makes the presence of life known to us. The bards of the bushes, the minstrels of the fields, are supposed to break off their music when the harvest is reaped, the leaves fall, or the snow is on the ground. The nightingale goes away early, the lark strikes work as soon as his family is reared, both thrush and blackbird are lazy and irregular performers when the days begin to shorten ; and even

in October the woods and groves and open lands are not vocal as they were in Spring with the voices of the plummy people. And yet these places are seldom altogether without a twitter—a bird-stave of some sort or other. Not long since, in the evening of a pet day, I saw the moon rise a huge globe of mellow fire over the edge of a hill. And in a thorn-bush, which hung over a pool with a fading tinge of saffron light in it, there was sung as sweet a welcome to this unusual night as ever the famous Philomel had for the beauty of a June gloaming. It was, to be sure, a thin little pipe, but gentle and natural, and grateful to the ear as the look of a wild flower to the eye. The musician on this occasion was a wee linnet, how inspired, who can tell?—but just at that moment the vespers of the creature, in the solemn quietude of all other things, gave the fancy a worshipful hint—a lift into a prayerful mood.

Let the robin have a reasonable allowance of sunshine even in December, and he will sing for it. He must get his crust, his crumb and a warm corner in the garden, and it is then ten to one that he finds his voice, and whistles over the winding-sheet which Winter has spread on the flower-beds. I kept a yellow captive in a cage, who used regularly to have a match with a red-waistcoat when weather permitted. Red-waistcoat came to the sill for breakfast, and cast a black cock-eye at Teddy the bird, who noticed him with a good-natured chirrup. To this the robin never replied until he had finished his meal, when he would take up his quarters in a laurel, and commence to warble in short reaches waiting for the response of the canary, which was certain to be given. Teddy would also sing loudly at a thrush or a blackbird when he saw one, but they never paid the least attention to his remarks, though he seemed as abusive and personal as the cantatrice who expresses rage and indignation in the opera. When snow has been a fortnight or three weeks on the ground, there are few birds indeed who have heart or hope enough to give tongue. There is then a desolate silence on mere and fen and forest, such as aeronaut or arctic travellers tell us they have felt themselves shrink from in the limitless spaces of the air, or in the ghastly dead-lands of the Pole. The birds are enduring the horrors of a famine. You will meet vast congregations of titlarks, linnets, hedge-sparrows, yellow-hammers on the quest for food, joyless troops these on laggard wings, not a note amongst the whole flock as they search for some moist place where the earth may have thawed, or scatter and forage feebly under hedgerows by the roadside where the sun may have melted the snow. Sometimes they are joined by the starlings and the fieldfares, who are on these occasions as mute as if they were in glass cases. The "black" frost makes matters if possible worse. Starvation then stares every bird in the face who cannot bring himself to accept relief from the dwellers in houses. Thrushes suffer fearfully, and are so exhausted

and emaciated that you occasionally find them dead or dying, and reduced and wasted to mere skeletons in the iron-bound stubbles. Blackbirds are of a hardier constitution. But this weather has its consolations for us who can protect ourselves from its inclemency. To hear the "honk-honk" of wild geese over your roof-tree as you lie in bed of a winter's night makes your crib warmer and cosier. These birds solemnly presage the frost, and you may be sure that from the vast height at which they soar they look down on the world whitening and hardening. Next day your window panes are covered with arabesque patterns, the most fantastic of scrolls and designs. As George MacDonald puts it,—

" With clear dead gleam the morning white
Comes through the window-panes,
The clouds have fallen all the night
Without the noise of rains."

The early sky is half-pink, half-purple, with one diamond point of white fire set in the darker background of the west, from which the curtain of night is only just moving off. The sun then touches the mountains, and their grey forms are suffused with a rosy tinge, which quickly changes to a bright marble hue. A convention of rooks talk on the increasing hardships of the weather in the elms. And I am away after an early breakfast, gun in hand, up the hills. The air is intoxicating in its keen freshness. Everything glitters, and sparkles, and shines; and as you gaze down from the skirts of the wood the sea stretches off endless leagues, phantom sails flitting on the verge, and the vast plain of water itself unruffled as a tarn in the mountains. The whistle of the plover is borne from the fens, and then the gradual thunder of a train. Now a rustle from the covert, and something flashes from the leaves, a sharp crack from the breech-loader and the woodcock lies on the frost-gleaming grass. Here is a glen, where a stream tinkles amongst icicles, while the yellow fairy coin is scattered about in all directions. A teal darts from an emerald patch round a spring, but he is saved, for in the very line of fire is a milkmaid scouring her pail in the brook, and carolling at the work in a fashion which would have delighted Master Walton, that sly connoisseur of rustic sopranos. By fir grove, and fen, and valley until at dusk upon the high road. The grip of the frost tightens more and more on the land. The rooks are holding anxious parliaments of a morning. I travel towards a pond in a wood. The atmosphere is full of resinous odours, and of the musk of dead leaves. Shod with the steel of swiftness, winged at the heels, how delicious to slide, and swerve, and swoop with the mere effort of volition round and about, in and out this picturesque nook, with the lichen-barked trees at its edge, and the merry ringing of the skates following you wherever you fly! But you will not have this enjoyment long to

yourself. Already four gentlemen have arrived at the bank, and one has hobbled in a gouty manner to the ice. He makes a nervous rush forward at the instigation of a—well, of a good-natured friend, and after three frantic plunges, and a grasp at the cantle of the papery-horned moon, and another for a hand from heaven or earth to save him, he hammers the ice with his head, and for the moment feels as if his nostrils were stuffed with the clay of the grave, while a million of fire-flies are passing in motes before his eyes.

Winter of course was the season of obsolete joviality. The mahogany tree was in full foliage when the wind souged through the bare branches of the forest.

“Come, merrily push round the toddy,
The cold winter's nights are set in;
To a roquelaire wrapped round the body
Add a lining of lamb's wool within!”

Macaulay will have it that the ancient Romans gossiped and revelled by the hearth, and listened to the story of how Horatius held the bridge when the logs of Algidus roared in the fire louder than the hungry wolves outside the cottage. With us the race of Tossopot is no more. Potations have become milder, and so bacchanalian minstrelsy is at a discount. Winter was long ago frequently made an excuse for hard drinking. You defied the cold as long as you held on to the decanter. The poets, to a man, were on the side of the toppers. Our English Anacreons were the bitter foes of temperance, and appeared to regard abstinence from the bottle as a sin against Nature. And a winter-gathering was incomplete without the ale-can going round, or the flowing bowl being passed from hand to hand. Is this so now? We know it is not in London at any rate. People in society do not sit round hearths, tell ghost stories, and grow what used to be termed fast and furious in mirth. It is really a matter of fact that crickets are leaving the chimneys, while a modern fine lady would as soon go in the way of hearing a stable-boy play the Jew's harp, as be within ear-shot of a vulgar kettle singing on the coals. The urn makes a poor attempt at music, but your kettle is a wonderful performer, and for those who are old enough to remember when it was allowed to chaunt and purr in the parlour, its voice is as moving as the ebb and flow of organ chords in a country churchyard at evening, when the notes stream from the open door around the tombs and the watchful elms. In Ireland a kettle was always kept on the hob to make whisky punch for the passing stranger, and the hospitable custom was only abandoned when urns were introduced simultaneously with a change of landlords throughout the island.

The country of Toyland is a country of frost and snow. Observe that the animals, the fauna proper to it, are all furnished with thick coats; the sheep are fleecier and fluffier than butcher's sheep; the

dogs are dressed for moving in Arctic circles; the Noah family wear great gaberdines to the ground, and I have met a Shem with a stiff billy-cock who might defy the weather anywhere. Take Jack—spring-back Jack—who resides in the box, he is also well prepared for the severer contingencies of climate, and mounts a perfectly natural comforter, in the shape of whiskers constructed of the débris of old muffs; he is no summer companion, but we used to enjoy his society, sitting on the hearth-rug when the candles were lit. He had a constant and flattering stare of admiration at our proceedings of a night, and he submitted to be shut up as uncomplainingly as a poor relation. The burly humming-top, none of your cranky, spiteful, outlandish contrivances which now pass under the name, but a fat portly globe which buzzed before the fender with a dignified boom, worthy of a bee sailing down upon an acre of honey-suckle,—that *was* a toy for a winter's evening! We knew nothing of clock-work mice, of miniature steam-engines, of dolls which could open their eyes and squeak on being squeezed like human folk, of scientific playthings, in short, and if we were shown a magic lantern, we were kept in blessed ignorance of its connection with optics by the governess. Every coral rattle now should have its utilitarian intentions; the infant takes in knowledge at the gums, and the discovery of the solar spectrum is revealed through the kindergarten method of coloured balls to the philosopher in leading-strings who still has a tooth for toffy.

When the fire goes out in the grate there is a text for a sermon, or trite discourse. The sun rises or sets; the seasons follow their allotted order; the heavens are bright or downcast; and we will have it that Nature sympathises with us. . . . How hard we try to think so in our pictures, in our poetry, in our common prose, when the crags frown and the meadows smile, and we survey everything through our own moods. The glamour is false, but we would not deprive ourselves of the power of submitting to it if we could. We need not carry the sentiment far enough to come under the reproach of Paganism, which Mr. Mivart tells us we may be liable to if we are not watchful over ourselves. We may not necessarily descry these "tributes to Alma Venus," which the philosopher perceives in the Spring song of birds (what about the Autumn song and Winter songs of some?), in the tints and perfumes of flowers, when we are looking at or thinking of the world we live in, which may and has been contemplated from another point of view. Pan is again in our midst. We must draw apart from his territory, shut our ears to his rituals. But surely there can come no harm to us if, in our old blundering fashion, we trust from time to time that mother-earth feels for God's children? Poets without end, never thinking for a moment of Alma Venus, and unlearned in the obstetrics of vegetable physiology, have innocently enough dwelt on the beauties of the external world, and

have fallen into the conceit of attributing to it a disposition to share in our moods,—a fancy which is often rudely rebuked by the actual disregard of nature for our straits, our triumphs, failures, joys or griefs. We have a lurking superstition in our minds that the skies should be draped in gloom when we follow to their last home a dear parent, a wife, or child, and we find instead that the road lies through sunshine and song of birds, and sight of growing flowers, or through the still ample beauty of a bright winter noon. Why do not the clouds mourn with us, and the trees hang their heads, and the sea near by sigh for our sorrow? We cheat ourselves curiously on the brink of this fancy when rain sobs on the hearse, or when the weather is propitious for the bridal. We are for ever trying to bridge that absolute isolation of which every human soul is conscious in its relations not only to every other, but to its dealings with the material external world altogether. Let us continue to take our moral lessons and indulge in moral reflections upon the seasons. The spring-time of youth, the summer of manhood, the autumn of decline, the winter of decay—in these you have the round of texts complete! You can expand them infinitely and with illustrations borrowed from the abundant treasures of didactic eloquence which are extant on the subject. There, the fire burns up with a sudden splutter again, and my driftwood of winter fancies for feeding it with is exhausted. The reader can easily find fuel of the same kind to hand, but we cannot warm our shins at an imaginary hearth, or feel the desolation of lonely ingle-nooks, when those we remember by our own have travelled into lands beyond the seas, have passed out of sight into wide-apart roads, or have left us to know the mystery of death which in a little while must be revealed to us.

W. BARRY.

GEORGE HERBERT AS A LOVER OF NATURE.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—It seems to me that Mr. Hutchison does George Herbert's poetry far less than justice in thus writing of it in the October Number of your Magazine :—"Of any love or special knowledge of the physical world there is scarcely a trace. One of his biographers has discovered a solitary verse, on the faith of which he complacently assumes that Herbert was thoroughly alive to the sweet influences of nature."

I give up the "*special knowledge*." Herbert may have known more than he has shown, but certainly we shall only rarely find in his poems a manifestation of that intimate acquaintance with the characteristic minutiae of natural objects which makes reading Tennyson as delightful as wandering through a wood in Spring. Still is it fair to say that Herbert had no "love of the physical world"—was *not* "thoroughly alive to the sweet influences of nature?"

Trusting to memory, and when that fails me to hunting, let me cull an anthology of lines and stanzas which seem to me to prove the opposite :—

"How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
Are thy returns! e'en as the flowers in Spring:
To which, besides their own demean,
The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
Grief melts away
Like snow in May,
As if there were no such cold thing.

"Who would have thought my shrivell'd heart
Could have recover'd greenness? It was gone
Quite underground; as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they have blown;
Where they together
All the hard weather,
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

"And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain."

"We are the trees, whom shaking fastens more,
While blustering winds destroy the wanton bowers
And ruffle all their curious knots and store."

"Or shall each leaf,
Which falls in Autumn, score a grief?"

"With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me."

"I had my wish and way:
My days were strew'd with flowers and happiness;
There was no month but May."

"All things are busy; only I
Neither bring honey with the bees,
Nor flowers to make that, nor the husbandry
To water these."

"Listen, sweet Dove, unto my song,
And spread thy golden wings in me;
Hatching my tender heart so long,
Till it get wing, and fly away with thee."

"The jealous Turkey brought his coral chain!"

"O that I were an Orange-tree,
That busy plant!
Then should I ever laden be,
And never want
Some fruit for him that dresseth me."

"A willing shiner, that shall shine as gladly
As frost-nipt suns look sadly."

"What hath not man sought out and found,
But his dear God? who yet his glorious law
Embosoms in us, mellowing the ground
With showers and frosts, with love and awe."

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky,
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
For thou must die."

"Sweet rose"——

but everybody who has ever read anything of Herbert's knows
"LXIII. Virtue."

"The stars have us to bed;
Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws:
Music and light attend our head."

* * * * *

"More servants wait on man

Than he'll take notice of : in every path
 He treads down that which doth befriend him,
 When sickness makes him pale and wan.
 Oh mighty love ! Man is one world, and hath
 Another to attend him."

"But time did beckon to the flowers, and they
 By noon most cunningly did steal away,
 And wither'd in my hand."

"One might have sought and found thee presently
 At some fair oak, or bush, or cave, or well :
 Is my God this way ? No, they would reply ;
 He is to Sinai gone, as we heard tell :
 List, ye may hear great Aaron's bell."

"Thou pull'st the rug, and wilt not rise,
 No, not to purchase the whole pack of stars,
 There let them shine,
 Thou must go to sleep or dine."

"The bird that sees a dainty bower
 Made in the tree, where she was wont to sit,
 Wonders and sings, but not his power
 Who made the arbour : this exceeds her wit."

"And ever as they mount, like larks they sing."

"First, Beauty crept into a rose."

"Each creature hath a wisdom for his good.
 The pigeons feed their tender offspring, crying,
 When they are callow ; but withdraw their food,
 When they are fledged, that need may teach them flying."

"Bees work for man ; and yet they never bruise
 Their master's flower, but leave it, having done,
 As fair as ever, and as fit for use ;
 So both the flower doth stay, and honey run."

"Most herbs that grow in brooks are hot and dry."

"I sought thee in a secret cave,
 And ask'd, if Peace were there.
 A hollow wind did seem to answer, No :
 Go seek elsewhere."

"We are the earth ; and they,*
 Like moles within us, heave and cast about :
 And till they foot and clutch their prey,
 They never cool, much less give out."

"Hark how the birds do sing,
 And woods do ring.
 All creatures have their joy, and man hath his."

* Afflictions.

"If as the winds and waters here below
Do fly and flow,
My sighs and tears as busy were above."

"O mother dear and kind,
Where shall I get me eyes enough to weep,
As many eyes as stars? since it is night,
And much of Asia and Europe fast asleep,
And e'en all Africk."

"But I a silly fly,
That live or die,
According as the weather falls."

"Flowers look about, and die not in their prime."

Finally, in the Latin verses beginning,

"Horti, deliciae Dominae, marcescite tandem,"

are we not reminded by.

*"Terram et funus olent flores . . .
In terram violae capite inclinatur opaco."*

of? —

"The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
An hour before death;
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily."

I think that I have made out my case, or rather that Herbert has made out his own, against Mr. Hutchison's heresy.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

GEORGIOPHILUS.

BROTHERS AND LOVERS.

VII.

MARGUERITE donned a trim black gown and neat white collar—every woman's test, the brunette's triumph—and went dutifully day after day to her work at the *café*. In those times of lost husbands, brothers, sons, sweethearts innumerable, the loss of one young, unknown girl's love passed well nigh unnoticed, even in the little town of Belle Chance. But none who entered the *café* could forget or cease to deplore, when they saw the sorrow-stricken maiden. Her calm, mournful resignation, her manner so suddenly softened and matured, told of the depth to which a deep nature had been stirred, and commanded respectful pity. There were no boisterous jokes, no lively flirtations now on the part of the careless soldiers. Sorrow bade a rough world stand afar off, and it so stood wondering. Ninon did all tact taught her to cheer Marguerite; but Ninon could not, alas! use her old remedies, confessing, with a sigh, that little lay in her power but to leave the wounded one to the healing power of time and natural buoyancy, and the friction of every-day life. She would have kept her god-daughter with her day and night, away from the scene and reminiscences of that fatal day. But Marguerite would not. She pleaded her lonely father, who required company; but there was a lonely heart as well that sought companionship in solitude. On her nightly walk home, alone, she turned aside to the little cemetery to pray a moment by a newly-made grave. After the evening meal, she wended—come fair weather or foul—to a dark spot in the thick copse, there to sit, with her hands clasped across her knees, weeping a little and thinking much.

Is it sacrilegious, is it unchivalrous to look into Marguerite's fluttering heart and see what is there passing? She did not think much, in the sense of connected conscious thinking, of Jacques. True, he was always present in her mind; he seemed to permeate, to be her mind; all her thoughts were twin thoughts, Jacques ever one of them. She loved to kneel by his tomb, to sit where he died, to dote over all his relics; but she did not weep much, for she hardly realized the materialness of her loss. The past appeared a dream, a pleasant but short dream, and so very far away—it seemed but a faint abiding memory of a previous existence. But on one thing she thought long and anxiously and self-tormentingly. This was Jacques's last wish, the very last, hardly uttered, dying wish. Were she and Pierre bound to fulfil it under all or any circumstances, because he had wished it? Must she marry Pierre if he asked her? If he did

not ask her, ought she to remind him of his duty to the dead? Margot was not altogether unreasoning in her reasonings as to this. Even great grief cannot banish common sense. She recognized perfectly that Jacques would rather desire it might never happen than that the union should be an unhappy one. She knew he could only mean, marry with love and good-will on both sides. She did not allow that to influence herself. She was ready, because Jacques wished it. As part of her martyrdom and devotion she could compel herself to love and be happy with Pierre; at least, she thought she could, which was the same thing for her argument: certainly she could pretend to, so that the blunt Pierre should not find out the sham. But then Jacques cared for his brother, and desired his happiness as well. Ought she to force Pierre, out of compassion, or a perchance mistaken sense of duty, to marry her who might fail to render his life happy, who might make it only miserable? Did Jacques's request go so far as that? She thought not. She was very nearly sure not; but she wished Pierre would put her out of the difficulty. She would be really a good wife to him; she would force herself to love him, if that were necessary, because Jacques wished it. It would not be such a great love as she had for Jacques, of course; but then Jacques could not expect *that*, if he realised what her love for him was, nor would he wish that she should so readily take that love away from him, and give it to another.

In such melancholy-wise passed Marguerite's thinking hours, with such self-disregard and love-penance did they ever conclude. Meantime, the days slipped away, terrible days of suspense for all, weary days of wondering for Marguerite, wondering what the end of her almost unearthly experience should be; for what fate she was destined. Surely it was an unkind deity that had picked out this simple, happy maiden to bear such strange and great crosses. But her church told Margot not to repine; and she drifted along as the current carried her, for she felt sure that Jacques was watching over her, that he would guide her; and whether the path were good or bad, natural or unnatural, smooth or rough, she cared not as long as it was the path he chose. Marguerite was ignorant—kind charity would use no harsher word—of the command: "Thou shalt have no other god before me."

December came, and winter with it. The trees were bare of leaves, but laden with pendant snow fringes. The white roofs cut sharply the clear sky. The homeliest sound made a cheerful resonance in the frosty air. Dull, bleak November had succeeded the genial glow of summer: it had passed not indeed again into the same sunny warmth, but by a healthy reaction into invigorating winter. Yet it was still dull, bleak November in Margot's heart.

With December came again terrible scenes, longer, more cruel, more crushing than any gone before. For four days and four nights did the earth-storm rage around and overhead, leaving wreck and

ruin and death in the wake of its gory mantle. On the last evening Marguerite ventured from the *café* on her too long-neglected pilgrimage—neglected for four whole days. None but her practised eye could have discovered Jacques's grave in the down-trodden, relic-strewn cemetery; but she found it, and, kneeling beside a poor soldier boy who had gone like *him* to his long home, offered up her evening prayer. Then she hurried down the lane, to the old footpath in the copse. By the stile was a body. She shuddered, for Tom Courtenay lay there, staring up into the blue sky, as she had seen her poor Jacques do. She prayed he might have no betrothed to inherit such agony as hers—agony that all may bear, none may share. She passed on, and shivered again, for a body was stretched on almost the very spot where Jacques had fallen; but the face was downwards. Marguerite did not fear the dead: she had never possessed any such morbid sensitiveness, and of late had lived with the dead—had been bound to a corpse. Yet a reverent awe came upon her at the strange fatality. Would this new blood wash away the stain of that other?

She knelt down, as was her wont, silently upon the snow, when the evening stillness was broken by a groan. She started; then this man was not dead but wounded. Had Heaven sent her thus a sacred trust on the spot where her treasure had been taken from her? The groan was repeated. Marguerite tenderly laid her hand upon the sufferer.

"Can I do anything for you?" she said, and then assisted the attempt he made to turn on his side. She caught sight of the face and fell back with a suppressed shriek—Pierre lay wounded where his brother had died.

Shot through the chest by a stray bullet, as the last wave of battle swept over the plain, cut off ere he could make good his flight into the forest, by the well-known wood-paths he had instinctively sought, Pierre had fallen and was slowly stiffening to death on the snow. The sight of Marguerite sent a warm pulse of blood through him, her presence nerved his waning strength, her voice dispelled the wearying brain-cloud that had been mastering every sense; he raised himself with an effort indeed, but he raised himself to a sitting posture, and said feebly—

"You are just in time, Marguerite; you have saved my life."

His words completed the change that had as suddenly been wrought in Margot. The sight of him had startled her dormant senses into action, his presence awoke her to the knowledge that she lived and must live, his voice cleft the atmosphere of dreams and brought her back to a real, working world, that buries its dead out of its sight and then does whatsoever its hand findeth to do. Her eyes "sparkled the true Promethean fire"—of work in the present, despite a visionary sacred past—of duty to be performed, however many pleasures were dead and gone. Marguerite started to her feet—and into life.

"I shall run to the farm and send them to bring you home; they

will not be long, you must have patience a very short time longer. Your mother and I will get everything ready for you and send off at once for a doctor."

"Stay, stay," cried Pierre, arresting her nimble feet. "It will alarm them less if I walk home; believe me I can easily walk that short distance—alone."

"With your aid," he would have said, but he dared not. He would make the attempt unsupported rather than let her go even for a few moments. Marguerite said it for him; she feared, as he did, the effect upon his parents.

"I don't think you can go alone, Pierre: perhaps, if I help you, we can get along. Lean upon me, and let us try."

Pierre did lean upon her; he was afraid to think how heavily, but he could not help it; he was very weak, and the short walk to the farm seemed terribly long, even with Margot by his side supporting him. But she was no slender weakling, and bore him up bravely until he staggered across the threshold prostrated by the inevitable reaction. The effort had sorely taxed him, and he lay insensible and groaning until the doctor arrived.

Marguerite showed all a woman's bravery. She solaced the women and encouraged the men; she prepared everything for the sufferer's comfort; she courageously assisted the doctor in his terrible task; she received all his orders and instructions; she soothed Pierre into a refreshing slumber, and installed herself as nurse—astonishing all who had thought her once an unfeeling useless girl, lately a sullen half-mad woman.

But Marguerite was made of the sterling stuff so many women are made of, so few have a chance of showing. The world tries to crush it out of women, and then abuses them for wanting it.

VIII.

DAY after day, night after night, passed anxiously, wearily away, as Pierre hovered on the shadowy confines between life and death. The wound, a serious one from the first, had been rendered highly dangerous by exposure, while the deceitful transient effort he had made in walking to the farm, completely exhausted the little remaining strength, and gave a severe shock to the strong system. So he lay waiting while Margot sat watching.

But slowly care and skill, aided nobly by a strong vitality and a strong will, gained the mastery. The patient was pronounced out of danger, and slowly regained strength and health. Thereafter his most potent salve was Marguerite's presence. It cheered and contented him. No wonder then he got better; *physic with contentment* is a great gain to the surgeon. Peevish discontent has a goodly number of deaths to answer for. He forgot his pain as he watched her sit by his side or glide softly about the room, his fever fled away at the touch of her gentle hand.

"What if it should ever be?" he would muse. "But that surely were too great bliss. Ah, if I had been less of a fool! Had I known both her and myself better! Had I seen how great she is, how little I am! Had I tried to make myself meet for her, rather than to make her fit for me, it might have been otherwise. Perhaps if I can show myself in some degree worthy she may have compassion; if I venture in faith and true loyalty to kiss the hem of her garment, she may turn to me and raise me, and perchance deign to love me. She may do it, because it was Jacques's last wish; but yet I think not; she is too good to marry me if she could not a little love me, if she could not honestly foresee happiness for us. Were she to do so, I wonder if I should have the courage to refuse; should I be brave enough to say, I love you too well to marry you not loving me, I cannot make you unhappy? I hope I might be able so to do, but I pray I may never be in such a case."

Then Pierre would humbly turn his face to the wall,—that Marguerite might see no shadow of pain or perplexity pass over it,—and listen in a mechanical way to Margot reading, drinking in, not sayings, witty, wise, or good, but a rich voice, like distant music "in linked sweetness long drawn out."

Meantime what thought Marguerite herself as she read—she read just as mechanically as Pierre listened—or, having dropped her work into her lap, watched him as he slept? If not so well as he hoped, yet assuredly not so badly as he feared.

"Is this really Pierre?" she asked herself. "Is this gentle, submissive, contented patient, the rough, sullen, ill-natured Pierre I used to fear so? Did I not know, or has the past changed him? Indeed a woman might love him very easily and very well,—were her heart her own, had she any love left unburied. But am I altogether right? Ought we to bury away the good and fair love God has given us? May it not be duty to love where we can if we cannot love where we would? Has this great, powerful for good or evil, love been bestowed to be used as we think best or for the fulfilling of our own little joys? Surely not, else why should a good God remove so often that on which we have foolishly set our hearts? He can only do that to make us love more nobly and more to his glory? This must be why Jacques was taken from me. I know I have been better and less worldly since, but God would not take away a great life for such a little gain; kill a noble man that a weak woman may live better. He must have intended Pierre to be the greater, and taken this terrible and inscrutable way of manifesting his greatness. And perhaps even He intended that I and Pierre should love each other for the good and happiness of us both. He may have been speaking by the mouth of Jacques that day. If He should lead Pierre to love me and say so to me, I shall take it as his own call, and I cannot refuse; if not, can He mean me—poor, weak, wicked me—for something nobler? Am I destined to be taken from this earth to him, or to his

church? I do not feel good enough for that; I love this fair earth, this bright world too much; but it must be such He takes from it, lest it come between them and His glory. I wish I could see clearly."

So Marguerite groped along darkly, longing for the light. So these two silently thought each of the other, until their thoughts got wonderfully entangled and were wont to run astray into most devious by-paths. Now they soared high on hope's dreams, again sank low amid dread fears. How each wished for the time when they could talk freely, for each thought to see in an accidental tone, in an unguarded phrase, perhaps in an overflowing confession, some indication of what was passing in the other's breast.

But it was long ere Pierre was allowed to talk. A shot through one's lungs is a sad foe to conversation, so but the most necessary remarks were permitted. Even when light conversation was sanctioned, Marguerite was too good a nurse to tempt him to overtalk or agitate himself by touching on such a theme.

Meanwhile, Pierre grew stronger every day, and at last his father and mother and Baptiste and a few neighbours were allowed not only to see him and shake his hand, but to have short talks with him. One day Marguerite left his mother by his side and went for a walk in the orchard, to catch a whiff of fresh air.

The old mother sat stroking her son's hand, and cheering him or being cheered. After a little, she said,—

"Tell me about my poor Jacques, Pierre; I was so deadened at the time, and you went away so suddenly, I never heard *all* about it. And as for Margot, one dared not come near it. She but said 'Hush!' and turned away."

So Pierre, with a bitter pain at his heart, told the false story, putting in as many of Jacques's words and as much of the truth as he could.

"And what were his last words, Pierre, his very last words?"

"They were for Marguerite, mother: she lay nearest his heart, so his very last thoughts were of her. He hoped I would look after her, and he hoped she would marry happy."

"Hoped she would marry happy, poor boy! And did he not say whom he would have her marry?"

"No, mother; we fancied he had some one in his head, but he was gone ere he could say the name. He only hoped she would marry happy."

Pierre turned his face to the wall, but Marguerite caught the pained expression it bore. She had entered quietly, and caught the last sentence as well. Her gentle voice startled both.

"You have been letting him talk too much. He looks quite tired. You must leave him now and let me read him to sleep."

The mother kissed her son and went away. Marguerite's voice quivered strangely when she spoke again.

"Pierre, you should not talk so much, you should not allow yourself to be flurried and tired thus."

"Ah, I am not tired with speaking, Marguerite. But why has your voice altered so? Why do you speak in that way? Did it hurt you to hear me tell my poor mother about—about that? I could not tell her all the truth, could I? She would have set her heart upon it, poor soul!"

"And why not?"

"Why not, Marguerite?—and you——?"

"Jacques wished it, why should not his mother—why should not I? I do not say I do, Pierre; but what were strange in my doing so?"

Marguerite was alarmed at her own boldness, but she had been led on by fate. Here was a favourable opportunity of reading her future—of knowing Pierre's mind. So she remained calm and collected, speaking with a brave, firm voice now she had begun.

Pierre's eyes shone with a glad, trusting light. Was it Marguerite spoke thus to him?

"Marguerite, do I hear aright? Do you mean the thought is not utterly abhorrent to you?"

"Why should it be, Pierre?"

"And not only because he wished it? It were a sin to agree for that reason only. I cannot have it so. But can you love me a little, only a little, for myself?"

"Why should I not?" she replied, with a kindly glance that told Pierre there was reason why she should rather than why she should not.

"Yet you take my agreement strangely for granted," she continued, quaintly. "Can *you* love me, Pierre?"

"Love you?——"

"Hush, let me finish. I will not have you marry me out of compassion or kindness, or because Jacques wished it. You must be sure of your own mind; do you really love me?"

Had great wonder and joy driven Pierre mad—been too much for that weary, tortured brain—broken the strings of that heart bursting with emotions long pent up? With a mighty effort he sat upright—the first time since he had lain down,—and addressed Margot with a wild passionateness that startled her at first, and defied all attempts at soothing.

"Do I really love you, Marguerite? Do you not, have you not seen it? Do I not love you more than tongue can tell? Do you not know I would have given my life a hundred times to hear from you such words as you have now spoken? Have I not loved you since we were boy and girl together—madly all my life?"

"All your life!" said Marguerite, with the look she bore when Jacques died, and in the same *far away* voice. Did she not believe him?

"Yes, all my life," said he, wildly. "Was it not as much for my own great love of you as for aught else I accepted you as a sacred charge from Jacques? Had I not loved you so, would I have so slightly risked my life——?"

Mad Pierre! False to Margot, to Jacques, most false to yourself. Why not bravely and modestly have spoken out the truth? You *would* have done it all for love of Jacques alone! Marguerite would have honoured you; the truth is too late now.

"Stop, stop," shrieked Marguerite. "I thank a merciful God for preserving me from you! I see it all now. You dared not avow your love while Jacques lived; you dare avow it now when you have murdered him;" and the girl fled from the room, while Pierre strove to detain her, and, with choking voice, to call her back.

Marguerite, rushing downstairs to weep in the orchard, heard the doctor's voice below, and hastened back to a little room of her own, in a distant corner of the house. She flung herself upon the bed, and there lay, at times weeping hysterically, for the most part unconscious. She only noted one thing—the great stillness that reigned in the house.

Marguerite must have fallen asleep, for she started up hurriedly at the sound of a knocking at her door. On opening it, the doctor stood there.

"I fear I have awaked you, mademoiselle?"

What did his strange visit, his untoward gravity mean? Marguerite felt a sickening faintness steal over her, as she asked, dreamily—

"What has happened?"

"What I feared for Pierre. The sudden bursting of a blood-vessel in the lungs——"

"He is dead, then?"

"It must have been almost instantaneous. He made a hard fight, for I found him slipped half from the bed to the floor, but it must have been very short."

These and other details Marguerite knew not until long afterwards, for with the inward heart-cry, "Have I murdered him?" she fainted.

* * * * *

"Adieu, Margot," said Ninon, weeping; while even old Baptiste's eyes watered more than usual. "What shall I do with your *dû*, darling? Alas, that it should come to this, Margot!"

"Nay, godmother, you know best what to do with it. Some small portion, however, I should like you to give to some happy girl on her happy wedding to a happy lover. Good-bye!"

So Marguerite went from many weeping eyes to a convent far away.

JOHN ADAM.

ON BEING RAMSHACKLE.

SOME are born ramshackle; some achieve ramshackleness (without intending it); others have ramshackleness thrust upon them (without desiring it). I was born ramshackle. And it is a great privilege. I have heard my father say that the family arms are ermine and roses. If so, I wish it were easy to dispose the elements of the scutcheon in such a way as to symbolise that order in disorder, that "sweet disorder," as the poet says, which is the essence of ramshackleness, or, for short, we will say Ramshackle. The ermine should stand for order,—the dark cuneiform spots in regular array. If I wore an ermine tippet, like a lord chief baron or some other great personage, do you think I would wear it awry? Not I, sooth; any more than I would permit my pictures to be framed or the frames to be adjusted in my ramshackle work-room at other than true angles. But the perky roses, stuck in the three spaces of the scutcheon, I detest. These I would break up into what George Robins called, or is said to have called, a litter of roses. True, the Garter king at arms, or his deputy, or whoever it is that settles such matters, might find it difficult to represent roses in a litter; but that is his business. A coat of arms is, as one should say, a coat of arms; and heraldic painters should have their own ways and means of doing things pictorially.

There are many ways of being what is called ramshackle. Probably most persons think ramshackleness is a mere form of slovenliness; but this is not so. It would be far nearer the mark to say that ramshackleness is naturalness. It is the *manière d'être* of the noble savage in polite society. There is something of it in Gothic architecture, and it has always been present in small quantities in English society. But very seldom pure. No man can be truly ramshackle who is self-conscious in the sense,—I grant you a very odd and twisted sense, but still a sense in which the word is often applied,—in the sense of caring to attract notice. We have always had in this country a breed or several breeds of "eccentrics," as they are called. You may read of them in queer old volumes entitled "Eccentric Biographies," relating chiefly to rich men who went about in the same suit for twenty or thirty years; clever ladies who made a point of having holes in their stockings; disappointed lovers who never washed their faces or allowed their rooms to be dusted; bucks who minced, or stalked up and down Bond Street in pale scarlet or turquoise

blue, or some other astounding colour. But these are not true *sonderlings* or eccentrics; they are *dilettanti*; they did it in order to be stared at, or talked about, just as Abernethy made a trade of giving rough answers to fine ladies who laced tight, and false dyspeptics who might have been well if they had chosen. No born ramshackle was ever a dilettante at it. True ramshackleness is nature protesting against over-civilization.

When very young indeed, I read in the old "Mirror" of Mr. Timbs an anecdote of some man of letters or antiquarian, who, being unexpectedly visited by a prince of the blood—I think it was a royal duke—had the tea equipage placed upon a pile of books that was handy for the purpose, or something of the kind, I forget the exact circumstances. The writer who told the anecdote made a great fuss about what he considered a sad breach of good manners, and a striking example of absence of mind in the host; but, as a little boy, I used to be unspeakably puzzled by his high-polite comments. Why should the host not have put the tea-tray on the pile of books, if that was the handy and natural thing to do? The reason would not come—there was, in fact, no reason to be had for asking. If the host was natural and simple-hearted in what he did, that was an instance of the true ramshackleness, though a very trivial one. A fellow who was born ramshackle would go much farther than that;—and only fools would stare or exclaim at him. Those who never in their lives had the moral courage to do an original thing, however plainly dictated by the truth of the situation, may call out, "You do it to appear singular;" but the true Ramshackle can defy augury. There is a special providence in whatever he does under the guidance of his daemon.

Ramshackleness is not more distinct from affected interruptions of customary routine than it is from slovenly or unwillingly incurred disorder. When we remove from one house to another our things are at first—and sometimes the "at first" lasts a pretty long time—I say, our things are at first in some disorder, necessarily so. But this is not the daemon; it is fate. There is no true ramshackle in disarrangements which we cannot help; much less in positive inconvenience under the same condition. Ramshackle must be with pure intent, or with felicitous absence of intention. The poet's "sweet disorder in the dress" may be beautiful and modest too, but if it is designed it is immodest, unless, indeed, it enters into the scope of some general artistic design. Just so there is ramshackleness which is insolence; while there is ramshackle which is of the nature of true humour, even of poetic humour. I call Caperna a ramshackle place; but I would black Garibaldi's boots for him, and kiss his feet when I had done.

Ramshackleness is not only not shabbiness, it is almost inconceivably remote from it. Shabby clothes, when I was forced to wear

them, used to cause me the most poignant shame, and I think rightly so. It is not that they prove poverty, but that they are hideous, and incline to be noisome. And, another thing,—to wear shabby clothes would be in my case the miserable confession of a bondage that made my heart sick. If I went along the streets in ignominiously shabby clothes, and I saw the averted eye of the acquaintance who wanted to dodge me, or the insolent glance of the “full-fed ruffian” stranger, gorgeous from his tailor’s creative hand, I should burn at the ear-tips, and gnash my teeth. But if I spoke to the curled cad, it would be in terms like these:—“Because I am forced to earn my living, I am forced to comply with your thick-headed notions about dress,—coat, such ; trousers, such ; waistcoat, such ; hat, such ; and the like. And when I have not money enough to renew, from time to time, the gloss and the cut of your beastly ugly inventions, I become shabby. It is my misfortune, sir ; and it is my sin and shame to feel forced to wear such ugly things as these tailor’s devilries are when outworn. But if you would let me have my honest way, if you would tolerate me for any social purpose (necessary in the case of a man who has to work for his clothes before he wears them) in clothes of my own choosing, I would never look shabby. You would see, sir, that I would manage to present a pleasing, or at lowest a not *unpleasing* appearance upon an income of nothing-a-year. I would, at this moment, undertake for one pound sterling to put you into a far prettier and more serviceable suit of clothes than you now wear at a cost of four or five. Put *that* in your pipe and smoke it ! I am ashamed of shabbiness, because it is ugly—an affront to the sun and the sweet brows of ladies ; but I will put on ramshackle attire to-morrow, if you will let me go about and earn my bread in it. But if you think I take *your* view of the shame of shabby attire, you are wrong. ‘You common cry of curs, whose breath I hate, as reek o’ the rotten fens,’ do you think, because I retire in my enforced shabbiness, that I am allowing you to ‘cut’ *me* ? Not so, I assure you ; far otherwise than so. ‘Go, I banish you.’”

The ramshackle spirit, so far as it relates to dress, furniture, and the like, may be read in two lights (—at least : everything may be read in twenty thousand lights, if you choose—). It is a form of originality ; or a form of stoicism. Originality is another name for sincerity. The stoicism may have its root, or one of its roots, in the sense of the awful, or in sympathy with the masses of human suffering. A man may well be conceived as saying, “I cannot stand a noise of pottering boots around me ; but then I should be miserable if I had carpets of Turkey pile about my place when so many of my fellow-creatures are half-starving, so I will have cocoa-nut matting.” You might call such a man a fool, or even go far to prove him one ; but you wouldn’t alter him. If he was capable of going that length

he would also be capable of laughing at you—and no less at himself—and yet of persisting. There was a verse of a hymn familiar to me in my very, very old days, which I sadly fear was written by one of the Wesleys, and which ran thus :—

“ Though ease and plenty, fruits of wealth,
And all the means of life and health,
And sweet convenience please us,
Without a house above my head,
Or feathers to make soft my bed,
My soul could——— ”

Now, would any sane human being guess what was coming? “ My soul could get along somehow, and be pretty comfortable ”—is that it? Ah me! it is nothing of the kind. It is this ridiculous climax-turned-upside-down :—

“ My soul could—*rest in Jesus!* ”

Oh, oh! how that line used to make me fume on my bed by night! Good God!—said my thoughts—thou Almighty Maker of heaven and earth! With thy thunder in our ears and thy lightnings in our eyes,—with battle-fields red with blood, and the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain until now,—shall we, in a psalm of so-called praise, sung straight up into thy dreadful face,—shall we make a fuss about our lodgings and our bolsters,—the difference between a flock mattress and a feather-bed; tell thee, thou Un-speakable One, that, *although* we have not feathers to our beds we can rest in the Infinite Word? “ Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ; thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father; thou hast taken upon thee to redeem man; ” therefore we can do without cushions for a time. Oh, oh!

Thus it was with me, in days when I held some opinions which I do not hold now, and knew, necessarily, much less of this weary world, and all that is to be said for different ways of putting things, and especially for differences of moral dialect. Let all this be considered, and handsomely. There still remains much excuse—surely more than excuse?—for bursts of stoicism in these days—in all days, truly, but especially in these? One reads, without surprise and with a secret pleasure, that there was a certain bareness, or even sordidness, about the appointments of Wordsworth’s home; and it is surely hard to walk open-eyed through life without occasionally exclaiming, “ Off, off, vile trappings! we are sophisticated! ” In the dead silent midnight, when a beloved life—nay when an unbeloved life—flickers in the socket under our eyes—in the dewy chill of the “ awful rose of dawn ”—how paltry do the “ sophistications ” of our daily life appear! You need not trouble yourself to draw the line on the other side,—to imagine a death-bed in a bare stone wash-house, or a cloakless beggar on a hill-top at winter daybreak,—I have

thought of all that, and it is no doubt as miserable to have too little help from art as base to rely too much upon such help. But there still remains plenty of room for the ramshackle spirit; and there is usually sufficient sense of humour in a ramshackle mind to save it from preposterousness. It is only for the sake of the women that some would desire luxury, or the means of luxury; you cannot help wanting to shield a beloved wife or daughter from the winds of heaven and all the uglifying chances of life. But even here there are limits. Baudelaire never looks so contemptible, so disgusting, indeed, as when he prefers the curried and combed belle of the capital to the breezy, inartificial "*yonge wyf*" of Chaucer.

The question of sincerity or originality remains. To be ramshackle in the true sense is simply to be true. Why should every man's chairs, and tables, and coats, and collars, and neckties, be of the same pattern as his neighbour's? If a new notion in such matters comes quite natural to any one, why shouldn't he work it out? "Affectation," did you say, sir? Pardon me, the affectation is in the vain, lazy imitating of the crowd, not in any one's originality. Till some one does what is not natural to him, he is not affected. "Originality in these matters looks singular, as if you wanted to attract attention." Really now! But what is that to me? If you would all go and be sincere, the whole lot of you would be original too, and then where would be the singularity? There is a young fellow who said to me one day—wasn't it rude of him?—"I believe, dad, if you were to be set down in a splendidly-furnished palace, you would want to turn all the furniture out of doors directly, and furnish all over again with things of your own inventing and making." The irreverent young man is not far from the truth. I should like to keep the fairy palace for my womenkind, but for myself I could *not* stand it. I should prefer to go and spend ten pounds in disused boxes, chumps of wood, hair or flock stuffing, chintzes, and other humble "*orts*," and make my own furniture. I am a very Robinson Crusoe sort of fellow—no, I couldn't have got on with only man Friday,—I'm a very Swiss Family Robinson sort of fellow—put it that way, please. I have something of Will Wimble in me, too. I never see anything that has been utterly cast off as useless, a bit of wire, a bit of iron, an old box, or what not, without immediately setting my wits to work to see what can be made of it. And, trust me, I have in my time made some smart little conveniences out of dustmen's lumber. I admire the furniture shops, but as museums of curiosities. And yet I have an eye for splendour. Gilding and gorgeous colours are quite in my line. But I like, so to speak, the death's head at the feast, something simple and bare by the side of the ornament. In every department of life, without exception, your true Ramshackle goes in for producing his results out of small and apparently intractable material. Was it not Wollaston who, when some visitor asked to see his laboratory

produced a tea-tray, with a retort or two, a blow-pipe, and so on? Now that's the man for my money. It is the same with books and studies. When I first saw a pair of globes, my thought was not how nice it would be to have a pair like them, but to make planispheres out of cardboard that would work the problems. It is the same with pleasures: I like the cheap and simple ones, and I like to take them in a resolutely ramshackle way. I feel affronted when any one says to me,—“Where are you going to this autumn, Mr. Fieldmouse?” It is a question which implies that I am under a sort of obligation to do as other people do “this autumn.” But why should I? Why shouldn't I stop at home if I choose? Or why shouldn't I take my holiday in my own way? In the same way, all questions, all compliments, all references to my affairs which imply that I live by a code, as other people do, offend me. Some of the things by which acquaintances and even friends have sought to please me have been to me as a red rag to a bull. “What do you intend to do with your son?” is surely a most impertinent and stupid question. I never allowed any one to “do” anything “with” me; I never mean to; and should I not do as I would be done by? The fact is, people seem one and all unable to conceive of any social *outcome*, so to speak, as desirable unless they are after the patterns they have been accustomed to. “I'd rather be a kitten and cry mew” than be thus tied to precedent. Do you think I don't see through this grand conspiracy of humbug? I have just been dipping into the life of a literary man who was “in society.” What a picture! what a sickening story of imitation, vanity, pretence, slander, malice, and scented hugger-mugger! It makes one exclaim, “Oh for a drop of [truth] in a quill, to bathe one's eyes with!” Do you think I would put round my neck for one hour the collar that was worn by any of the fellows who allowed a beast like Rogers to insult them to their faces, as that chartered ruffian used to do in the best society? Poor country mouse that I am, I look down upon the whole concern with scornful rage, except when I laugh at it. Do you think I would put on a swallow-tail, and wear *your* yoke? No, thank you, I will sooner “swing on a gate and eat fat bacon all day long.” I do not like your fine company. How I admire Béranger, keeping himself to himself and steadfastly refusing to be “introduced.” “*Dans un grenier qu'on est bien à vingt ans!*” yes, and at any age, if Lisette be there, I mean the better Lisette.

But this does not imply that your true Ramshackle is at home in the set Bohemianism of your Quartier Latin or any other rookery. That is just as offensive in its way as the “good form” of society. I protest I know of nothing more conventional, more hollow, more intolerant, more insincere, than Bohemianism so-called in literature. You indifferent to poverty? Ah, ah, do you think I can't see through you, gentlemen of Bohemia? You *despise* poverty in your

hearts. Your sort of ramshackle is only a convention that you use partly as a blind, partly as a coat of mail. If you were sincere, you would wear neither the mask nor the armour.

I have scarcely known anything more marked than the gradual growth of the spirit of conventional luxury or genteel propriety in recent literature,—especially in novels. Three-fourths of the charm of some of the most successful novels lies in their pictures of a style of life a little above that of the majority of their readers. There are plenty of pictures of the life of the poor, as matter of humour, as matter of compassion, by way of foil, or as matter of curiosity; but the assumptions of most novels are that the reader is *necessarily* "in society," and utterly above all hard-working cares. Your young fellow has his club, and lunches on clear turtle soup, cold chicken aux champignons, and St. Peray or Beaune, with a cigar worth a shilling to follow. And when we come to the private life even of the virtuous young curate who retires into so-called simplicity of living with his high-bred wife, I can only say that their idea of poverty or simplicity of living is not mine. Mine would knock them both out of wind and time, and make the novelist's fine words look rather silly. Oh, these things enrage me! Why, years ago, when I was young and soft, at a time when I was forced to mend with paper my own one pair of shoes to keep my feet from the stones, I have been got to subscribe to help a "scholar in distress,—poor man,—such a dreadful case;" and I found out afterwards, that the "scholar" could ride about in a cab and wear fine kid gloves. Mean dandy, how I hated him! By poverty, I mean that of such a life as, to my certain knowledge and personal observation, Mazzini lived,—during part of his time, I hope not for long. That is what I call poverty!

We will not talk much of the Ramshackle tendency to find friends in Alsatia. The most beloved of English humourists said that his intimates had always been "a ragged regiment." George Sand, speaking for herself through the mouth of one of her characters, says (I quote at random), "C'est parmi les pauvres diables que j'ai toujours trouvé mes amis." That is good,—pauvres diables is good,—to parody Polonius. I fear the true Ramshackle does not like successful people of the world. For myself, I dislike a fellow with any sort of gloss upon him,—moral, religious, intellectual, or other. I cannot—except by keeping silence, or shunning him—resist the temptation to snub a *millionnaire*; as for moral or social gloss, the following sentences from a recent story will serve my purpose for a concluding turn. The hero of the story is supposed to have got into some discredit, and this is the way in which the novelist goes on about his and his wife's position in "society":—

"The Leylands' position had been somewhat peculiar. Almost alone among the city people—the higher clerical dignitaries scarcely coming

under that category—they had been freely admitted as of the ‘county set.’ The Homfrays and, perhaps, the Rogersons, just one here and there, enjoyed the privilege with them; but still very few in number were the favoured ones. And now it seemed that by this the outer measure of Leyland’s lapse was to be decreed.

“Leyland’s name was on the books of the very exclusive County Club; and, at quite the first of his return, there went about a steady report that a general meeting of the club was to be called to consider the propriety of removing it therefrom. Leyland would long ago have voluntarily withdrawn his name, had not Mr. Rogerson, Mr. Hulyard, and other friends of his, laid it on him not to do so unless the choice came to be only between that and actual expulsion. This was the state of affairs; the Rogersons, Hulyards—the city, in short—might be depended on not to further visit Leyland’s offence on his head; but the greater county people were slow to give any sign, and the Banbrooks and others of that stamp would surely enough follow them, whatever the event were.”

Now this sort of thing makes me feel as if I should like to hew somebody in pieces before the Lord, as Samuel hewed Agag. And I believe the Lord would approve the action. The true Ramshackle says, “I will not have your Society at the cost of the degradation and falsehood there is in all this.” Society is worth nothing except in proportion to the sincerity and originality of the individuals composing it. In a state of over-civilization, sincerity and originality (by which last is meant simply what must flow out of Naturalness) will be *forced* into Ramshackleness. In the ramshackle world, there may be the happiness and serenity that come of truthfulness. In yours, never, or only by rare chances. I like luxury now and then—

“This jelly’s rich, this malmsey healing,—
Pray dip your whiskers and your tail in;”—

Yes, for a change, fairly giving and taking, so that there shall be no favour shown and no obligation incurred on either side. But it must all come naturally, if at all; and long before

“The cat comes bouncing on the floor”

I shall exclaim—

“Give me again my hollow tree,
My crust of bread and liberty!”

TIMON FIELDMOUSE.

EVENING LONGINGS.

BY BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSSON.

I.

THE Princess sat high in her maiden-bower,
And the boy blew his horn below by the tower :—
“ *Be silent, thou boy, why blowest thou so ?*
Thou hinderest my thoughts that afar would go
With the setting sun.”

II.

THE Princess sat high in her maiden-bower,
And the boy no longer blew by the tower :—
“ *Why art thou so silent ? Again thou must blow :*
Thou helpest my thoughts that afar would go
With the setting sun.”

III.

THE Princess sat high in her maiden-bower,
And the boy blew again below by the tower ;
And then she wept in the eventide :
“ *What do I then want, my God !*” she sighed :
Then the sun went down.

MEMOIRS OF A CYNIC.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CONTRASTS."

IX.

My Scotch friend attended me through the whole of my fever, and until I had reached a state of convalescence, when he was obliged to leave me, and I was placed under the care of a practitioner in the neighbourhood. Health returned to me but slowly, and it was several months before it was fully restored. During the latter portion of my convalescence I began again to consider what profession I should adopt, but could come to no decision on the subject. The legal profession I had already relinquished, why I hardly know, unless it was the keen susceptibility to the ridiculous which has haunted me through the whole of my existence. I now looked on the medical profession with abhorrence; not but that I fully admitted how much we were indebted to its professors, and the many beauties and attractions it possessed. Still, the horrible sight of that dissecting room remained as fresh on my memory as if I were present in it, and I turned from it with loathing and disgust. At last I resolved to wait till I was fully restored to health, and then consult my uncle on the subject,—that is to say, if I could induce him to interest himself in it; and this determination I carried out.

When I called on my uncle after a sojourn of some weeks in the country, he complimented me on my restoration to health.

"Your illness," he continued, "has certainly left its traces behind it. You are far thinner and paler than when I last saw you. Now tell me what I can do for you, as I am rather in a hurry this morning."

As when I entered the house there appeared no signs of either bustle or confusion, but my uncle was calmly seated in his chair reading the newspaper, I naturally suspected his being "in a hurry" was simply an excuse to get rid of me. However, I made no remark, but told him I wished to consult him as to what profession I had better enter.

"I really cannot advise you on the subject," he said rather testily. "You are now old enough to know best what profession or occupation suits your tastes and idiosyncrasies. You had better decide for yourself on the matter, and when I know what your views are I will assist in carrying them out."

"But, uncle," I said somewhat firmly, "I want your opinion. You are my guardian, and I submit I have a right to ask it."

"Well, my dear fellow," he replied, "my opinion is simply this.

You are not old enough, or at any rate not settled enough, to make up your mind on the subject. Again, I tell you candidly that for either of the learned professions I do not consider your education is sufficient. What say you to the army?"

"I have thought of that, uncle," I said, "but it would be long before I could get a commission, there being so many names down I understand, which would cause considerable delay. Besides, I did not know you had any interest in the service."

"Nor have I," said my uncle, rising from his seat. "Now I tell you what I think you had better do. Wait till you are of age, which will be in two and a half years, and then you can decide for yourself. In the meantime I should advise you to reside with some man of education, with whom you could carry on your studies till you are fitted not only to enter the medical profession, but to take any position in society which may be open to you. By that means you will be better able to choose for yourself, and it will relieve me of all responsibility of deciding for you in your present unsettled state of mind."

I must say I much liked the view my uncle took of the matter, and told him I would adopt it without further hesitation. I asked him with whom I could reside. He hardly knew, he said, unless with a retired Oxford tutor living with his wife at Brighton, with whom he was acquainted. They were in moderate circumstances, and as they had two sons in the army, he thought it very probable they might not object to add a hundred and fifty or two hundred a year to their income.

"If you like the idea," continued my uncle, "I will write to them on the subject."

I readily accepted his offer, and shortly afterwards left the house.

In three days my uncle received a reply from Dr. Morgan, the tutor alluded to, saying he should be happy to receive me into his house, on the understanding that the agreement should end as soon as either was tired of the other's society, or any other circumstance occurred to make a separation advisable. This my uncle accepted on my part, and the next week I was domiciled in Dr. Morgan's house at Brighton. I found the doctor and his wife a very amiable couple, and we agreed well together. The morning was dedicated to study, and in the afternoon each took his own way till we met at dinner. In this manner eighteen months of the time passed on, when the Doctor told me that he and his wife had determined to remove to Paris—would I like to accompany them? I assented without hesitation, and my uncle approving the plan, we started off together for Paris, where the Doctor took apartments in the *Quartier Latin*. Our establishment and method of living, though modest and unassuming, was most comfortable. The doctor was an excellent French scholar, and soon formed a circle of acquaintances among the professors of the different schools in the neighbourhood. I had myself

already received some instruction in the French language, which was still fresh on my memory, but not sufficient to make me a very accomplished French scholar. I now put myself under a professor of the language, and read with him an hour daily, till I could converse fluently.

With the different adventures which happened during my sojourn both at Brighton and Paris I will not detain the reader, especially as I do not think any of them would excite the slightest interest in his mind. I wrote several letters to Burton, but for some time received no answer. At first I thought that he was in ill-humour with me for my neglect of him after my return from India. At the same time I was obliged tacitly to admit that he was hardly of a disposition to retain any ill-feeling against me, especially after the frank expressions of regret I had made in my letters. The mystery was, however, at last explained. About a fortnight before I came of age, I received a letter from my uncle, enclosing one for my tutor, and another to me from Burton, bearing the Calcutta post-mark. In it he informed me that he had heard of my having sent a message to his house shortly after my return from India, he at the time being in the country. He then received an appointment, or writership, as it was then called, in the East India Company's civil service, and a month afterwards left London for Calcutta. He told me he should from time to time correspond with me, and begged me to write and inform him what my present occupation and prospects were, as he should always be interested in my welfare, and sincerely trusted we should some day meet again.

My uncle's letter to me was couched in a style far different from his ordinary curt epistles. In the present instance he was rather diffuse than otherwise, addressing me in terms of great consideration and affection. He reminded me that in about a fortnight's time I should be of age, and advised my immediate return to England, as he should like me to audit the account of the receipts and expenditure of my property placed in his hands, with which he hoped I should acknowledge he had acted the part of a just steward. The letter to my tutor was in my uncle's usual short and concise style. In set phraseology he thanked him for the good service he had rendered me, and enclosed a cheque for the last half year's salary, about to become due, informing him of his wish that I should immediately return home. My leave-taking with my tutor and his wife was friendly in the extreme, and that without any affectation or compliment on either side. I had acquired for them an amount of sincere respect and good feeling I had seldom experienced for any of those under whose care I had hitherto been; and I am fully convinced the feeling I entertained towards them was fully reciprocated.

On arriving in England my uncle received me in a much more friendly manner than usual; so warm was it, in fact, as to cause me considerable surprise. Instead of the few cold abrupt sentences he

was accustomed to address to me, nothing could be more affectionate than his manner. He questioned me as to the progress I had made in my studies, and whether I, personally, was satisfied with the attention and instruction I had received from my tutor.

"I should tell you," he continued, "that he writes me word that in point of education you are sufficiently advanced to commence the study of either law, physic, or divinity; that you are as a classical scholar somewhat above the average of young men leaving the Universities, for, although inferior to many, you are certainly superior to a still greater number. He further says you are a fair mathematician, and, for a young Englishman, a remarkably good French scholar; that your accent, if not perfect, is certainly far more so than ninety-nine Englishmen out of a hundred who profess to be acquainted with the language, while your grammar leaves nothing to be desired. Now all this is very encouraging, and I can want nothing more if you yourself are satisfied."

I told my uncle, modestly, that it was a difficult question for me to decide, as I was a bad judge of my own qualifications. At the same time, I must admit, that if all were not true that my tutor had stated, it was certainly more my own fault than his, for nobody could have been more kind, assiduous, and attentive than he had been to me the whole time I had been with him.

"Well," said my uncle, "that is very satisfactory on both sides. And now let me ask if you have selected the profession you intend to follow?"

"I have not definitely decided," I replied. "I think, however, it will be the law."

"As a solicitor or barrister?" said my uncle.

"As a barrister certainly," I replied.

"Do you intend at once entering an Inn of Court?" he inquired.

"And if so, which will you choose?"

"Frankly," I said, "before commencing the study of the law, I should much like to take a holiday, and see a little of the world—that is to say, if you have no objection to offer."

"None at all, my boy," was his reply. "I think the wish perfectly natural. What countries do you particularly desire to visit?"

"Italy especially," I said. "It has always been my wish to visit that country; and now that I have the opportunity I should like to do so. I should also like to see the principal cities of Germany before I return. All French cities, I understand, are like Paris, so I should have little inducement to remain long in France. Altogether, I should wish to be absent some six or seven months, and when I return to my own country I shall set steadily to work at the law. I hope you don't consider the proposition an unsatisfactory one."

"Not at all," said my uncle. "I think, on the contrary, you are perfectly right in the course you propose to pursue. It is exactly

the sort of thing I should have done had I been in your place ; and indeed, had I had thirty years less on my head, it is more than probable I should have offered to accompany you. As it is, I have now little wish to travel, for I feel the infirmities of age rapidly coming on me. To-morrow," he continued, "if you have no objection, I will go through the accounts with you, and if you find them correct, as I trust you will, I shall, the day you come of age, make everything over to you."

Of course I had no objection to offer to the arrangement, and we then separated for the day.

The next morning, when I entered my uncle's sitting-room, I found an ominous number of books, papers, and deeds spread on the table. Possibly my surprise at their number was visible on my countenance, for my uncle said to me,—

"I suppose you are not accustomed to audit accounts."

"I have had no practice whatever," I said to him ; "and, in fact, know nothing about them. However, of this I am certain that examine them as I may I shall not be more fully convinced of your integrity and good management than I am at the present moment."

"Very complimentary of you, my boy, to say so," he replied. "But that's not my way of doing business. We will go, if you please, *seriatim* through the whole, much as it may bore you ; and as the sooner a disagreeable job is begun the sooner it is finished,—which no doubt you have often heard before,—we will set to work at once."

The audit of the accounts lasted several days. The details I will spare the reader, for certainly nothing could be more monotonous than the work. I candidly believe that I had to put my initials to every half crown my uncle had spent during my minority, as certifying it was correct. He had invested, he told me, a good deal of my money in the purchase of annuities. Whenever he had 400*l.* or 500*l.* in hand, he had purchased with it either an annuity or a reversion, and in case he could find none in the market, sooner than allow my money to lie idle, he had transferred to me one of his own at the price he had given for it. There were also several other investments he had made for me, but which I did not understand. The only remark I made during the time was, that I had no idea affairs of the kind could be so complicated ; to which he replied, that the good interest they paid was the result of these complications ; had all been simple, my income would have been far less.

"At the time your property came into my hands," he continued, "the money was in the Funds, and the whole did not exceed 300*l.* a-year, and now your annual income is certainly not less than 500*l.*"

I must admit that this intelligence gave me much satisfaction, as I had no idea I was master of so large a sum. My uncle evidently noticed my pleasurable surprise, and addressing me again, said,—

"Do not imagine I have been ignorant of the suspicion which has always haunted you of my being indifferent to you and your welfare.

You have now before you a sufficient proof of the injustice you have done me. However, let bygones be bygones, and I hope for the future you will think better of me than you have hitherto done."

I hardly knew what reply to make him, when, seeing my embarrassment, he relieved me from it by saying,—

"And now, do you intend taking the management of the property into your own hands?"

"I am afraid, uncle, I should hardly be able to understand how to manage it properly," I replied; "some of the securities seem so complicated; at any rate, until I have made some progress in the law, and am better able to understand their legal nature myself."

"Still," said my uncle, "some one must look after it, especially while you are absent. Who would you like to do so? If you know of no one, I am perfectly willing to do it for you till your return, for, to tell you the truth, I am getting somewhat tired of business."

I told him he would greatly oblige me if he would, and an arrangement was then entered into between us. I was to start on my travels with a hundred pounds in my pocket, and every three months a similar sum was to be forwarded to me to any address I might appoint. The surplus of my income could accumulate till I returned to England, as I should then incur expenses in entering my profession, which that amount would help me to defray. All this met with my perfect approbation, and the day after my coming of age, I started on my journey.

In point of time Italy was then at far greater distance from London than at present. In one respect this was not altogether a loss, for I saw many interesting towns on my way, which are at present missed by the traveller who makes the journey by rail. I think by the diligence it took me four days and three nights to arrive only at Chalons. From that town I descended the river to Lyons, where I took up my abode at a first-class hotel, resolving to remain there for a week. I had not then determined what route I would take into Italy, whether by Mont Cenis, or through Nice to Genoa. I remained for some days in doubt, each way offering great attractions.

On one occasion at the table-d'hôte I entered into conversation with a French gentleman on the subject, who appeared rather a singular character. He was a man of about forty-five or fifty years of age, tall, well-made, though rather common-looking in the face, and fluent in conversation. In his manners there was a singular contrast. With me, as we became better acquainted, there was a frank *bonhomie* about him that pleased me exceedingly. With strangers he was courteous to excess, at least in his manners, which would have been graceful had they not been exaggerated. They struck me as rather the pantomime of an actor on the stage playing the part of a nobleman, than those of a gentleman in ordinary life. Possibly this conclusion was arrived at from his being so well versed in theatrical matters. He knew everything connected with the whole

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of the theatres in Paris, not simply those of the Boulevards, but all the principal operas and theatres—who were their patrons, their best singers and dancers. Although I had occasionally been to the Opera and some of the theatres when residing in Paris, I knew nothing whatever of their management or politics, and listened, therefore, with considerable attention and amusement to the anecdotes with which my new friend regaled the others at table.

Having discovered that he was going into Italy, I ventured to ask him what route he intended to take.

"By Mont Cenis to Turin," was his reply.

"The reason I inquired," I said, "was because I am undecided what route to take myself."

"Well, then, come with me," he said, "I know the road perfectly well, and most of the towns in the north of Italy, especially Turin, Milan, and Venice, and if I can be of the slightest use to you in showing you the lions, you have but to command me."

I thanked him cordially for his kindness, and the next morning he conducted me to the diligence office, where he took two places in the coupé, and started the same evening for Turin.

X.

THE commencement of my journey from Lyons was somewhat uninteresting. In consequence of the darkness there was nothing to attract my attention to the scenery, I conversed, however, with Mr. Lefevre, my new acquaintance, at considerable length. Although a Frenchman, I found he was well acquainted with the manners and customs of England, and spoke the language with tolerable facility. In one respect he had greatly the advantage of me, for he had (in England at any rate) been in a far higher position in society than myself. He questioned me about our own nobility, and whether I was acquainted with them. He frequently spoke of being intimate with Lord Lowther, the Marquis of Hertford, Lord Sefton, and many others, whom poor I only knew by name, so elevated was the sphere in which he moved above my own. And then again he questioned me as to my own profession. I avoided the subject as much as I possibly could, for I was ashamed to acknowledge the inferiority of the society in which I had hitherto moved, and which I was hardly aware of until that moment. I must say I felt some compunctions of conscience at the meanness of concealing my real position. I told him I had been in the navy (may God forgive me!) and that I had served in the East Indies, but having been seized with a violent illness, I now intended to practise at the bar. He complimented the British Navy very highly, adding that although sickness was a good reason for leaving it, he could hardly excuse any other, so many attractions did it appear to possess in his eyes. The bar had also its attractions, he said; there had been Milord Ellenborough, Milord Eldon who were held in high respect, although personally he knew

but little of them. He then spoke of other members of the aristocracy whom he had met with, especially officers in the Guards, and asked if I were acquainted with any. I remembered that the colonel of the regiment we had taken from St. Helena to Bombay had formerly been in the Guards, and I said I knew him, although, if the strict truth were told, the only conversation that ever passed between us was his telling me to get out of the way, when, in a heavy shower of rain the soldiers were going below, to which he received an uncomplimentary reply. Mr. Lefevre did not know the colonel, nor even remember his name, but his having been in India, I thought, might account for that. Two or three times I tried to recollect the name of some lord to quote against the many with whom he was acquainted, but he quite crushed me, by telling me of a remark once made to him by His Majesty George IV.

Mr. Lefevre now fell asleep, and I attempted to divine what his profession could be. His language and ideas seemed to be those of a gentleman. He was evidently acquainted with many of our aristocracy, and yet the exaggerated gestures he made use of, especially when addressing ladies, threw me in some doubt as to whether he really was the aristocratical person I imagined him to be. At last I fell asleep myself, nor did I awake till the diligence arrived at Pont Beauvoisin, the frontier town of Savoy, where we breakfasted, and our luggage was examined. After a delay of two hours, we again entered the diligence, and continued our journey. In a short time the country became more picturesque, and I, who had never been accustomed to mountain scenery, was perfectly delighted with the prospects around me, and enthusiastic indeed were my expressions concerning it to my companion, who fully sympathised with me. Like most Frenchmen, Mr. Lefevre had evidently artistic tastes, and continually pointed out to me delicious little spots, such as bridges, churches, cascades, &c., which I might have missed in contemplating the majestic scenery around. One time, on approaching La Grande Chambre, my companion was especially enthusiastic when we came to a bridge with a waterfall rushing beneath and a tower at the end.

"What a magnificent effect that would make," he said, "with some peasants crossing the bridge, and a soldier in mediæval breast-plate and helmet, standing with halberd in hand near the tower!"

So vividly did he describe this that I could almost imagine I saw it, and it struck me at the time that the word "scene" he had made use of was very appropriate, as it would have been very beautiful for a theatre.

At St. Jean de Maurienne we dined, and afterwards he proposed we should walk on together and enjoy the scenery while the horses were being harnessed. This we did, and I think I never met with a more agreeable companion than Mr. Lefevre appeared to be that day. All conversation about the aristocracy had been dropped, and the scenery and habits of the people were the sole subjects we talked

about. We amused ourselves by walking on the bridge, looking at the river, and admiring the beauties around. On our return to the inn, we found the horses had not yet been harnessed, and we proposed walking onwards till the diligence should overtake us, which it did at nearly daybreak, when we entered the coupé, and both, thoroughly tired, fell fast asleep. At Modane my eyes were for the first time delighted with some Italian names over the shops, as well as directions in the road in the same language. Here we merely changed horses, and continued our road to Lanslebourg, where we breakfasted. Feeling greatly refreshed by my meal, I proposed to Mr. Lefevre that we should traverse the mountain together, by the foot-path, instead of by the circuitous route the diligence would take, but he pleaded fatigue, saying that his walk of the evening before had somewhat knocked him up, as he was not as young as I was. I regretted the loss of his society, and started off in company with two or three young Frenchmen who were passengers inside the diligence, and arrived at the Hospice before the cumbrous vehicle had overtaken us. Here we dined, and then continued onwards down the Italian side of the mountain. About midnight we arrived at Turin, where Mr. Lefevre and I took up our quarters at the Pension Suisse.

It was late the next day before I arose, so thoroughly fatigued did I feel with my journey. On descending to the coffee-room I was told that Mr. Lefevre, having some business to attend to, had left the hotel, but that he would return to the table-d'hôte at five o'clock. During the day, I occupied myself by roaming about the city, entering churches, noticing shops, as well as the inhabitants. In fact, I was so thoroughly happy in the novelty of the scene around me, that the time passed more rapidly than I had calculated. I now attempted to wend my way back to the hotel, but in consequence of the rectangular manner in which the streets were built, I had some little difficulty in doing so, till at last I met with a gentleman who could speak French, and he kindly directed me. On entering the hotel I found dinner was already begun, but Mr. Lefevre had kept a place for me, beside himself. He proposed that afterwards we should go to the café, and have a cigar and chat together over our coffee. To this I willingly agreed. Having selected a table at a café under the arcade of one of the principal streets, Mr. Lefevre asked me, shortly after we had seated ourselves, how I had occupied my time during the day.

"Simply in strolling about the streets, so as to get a general idea of the city, inspecting churches, and the exterior of public buildings. And highly pleased I was; I had no idea Turin was such a magnificent city. I shall know more about it to-morrow though, as I intend to get a guide, that he may take me to the picture-galleries—for I suppose there are some—and other objects worth seeing."

"Do not trouble yourself to get a guide," said Mr. Lefevre, "for I know Turin well, and shall be happy to go round with you. With the exception of an engagement I have in the afternoon, I shall have

nothing to do all day. On the following day, I shall most probably leave Turin for Milan, and hope I shall be fortunate enough to have you again as my fellow-traveller."

"What makes you leave Turin so early?" I inquired.

"I suspect it will be little use my remaining here," he replied; "I shall be able to transact more business at Milan."

I had long been anxious to know Mr. Lefevre's occupation, for he puzzled me extremely. That he had been in good society was certain, from the familiar terms he appeared to be on with many of our aristocracy. He was a gentleman also of artistic tastes—of that there could be no doubt. Still I hardly knew how to commence the conversation, when fortunately he saved me the trouble.

"I wish," he said, "I were like you, travelling solely for pleasure, and able to go wherever the whim or caprice of the moment dictated. Business, however, must be attended to."

"Are you in business?" I inquired, putting on a tone of surprise, half real, half feigned. "I should hardly have thought it."

He evidently appeared gratified by my remark, and, after making me an exaggerated bow, said,—

"Yes, I am. I hardly know how to term my occupation. It is partly business, partly professional, and partly artistic. In fact," he continued, with a burst of confidence, "I am connected with the opera-house in London, where I was formerly ballet-master; and it was in that occupation that I made the acquaintance of so many of your aristocracy. Afterwards I relinquished that post on Laporte becoming manager of the theatre, and have since acted as travelling agent for him. My employment now is in selecting talented new dancers for the opening of the theatre in the spring. I selected one or two in Paris; but the stars are well known, and are so extortionate in their demands, that I made but few engagements there, and thought I might as well come on to Italy, where I suspect I shall find a good deal of talent, not very well-known, that I shall be able to pick up on favourable terms. And this is the more likely, as I am well acquainted with the north of Italy, having formerly been senior professor of the opera-dancing school at Milan. You may imagine, then, that I not only know a good dancer when I see her, but have my eye on others whom I am certain will be stars in their time."

"Have you concluded any engagements in Turin?" I inquired.

"No," he replied, "nor do I think it likely I shall. There is a dancer at the Carlo Felice, I am told, who has made somewhat of a sensation here, and I shall go to-night to see her. She has been trying to persuade me all the morning to make an engagement at once, as she is anxious to appear in London. I'm too old a hand to do anything of the kind; moreover, I do not think she will suit me."

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Well, from her appearance," he said, "she is evidently a dancer of the *Scuola Walmoden*.

"Walmoden?" I said; "I know that name well, but he was a military officer."

"So he is," said Lefevre. "He is general of the Austrian troops in Milan. A man enormously wealthy, and a most liberal patron of the ballet. Unfortunately he, and some of his associates nearly as influential as himself, all admire dancers of the robust school, estimating strength and weight far more highly than grace. Well, the manager of the theatre, an intimate friend of mine, who of course knows what good dancing is, is greatly vexed at this; but, as I said before, the general is so generous, he does not like to offend him, and the whole of the Austrian party would set themselves against him if he did. Besides that, I heard from the poor fellow I called on this morning that Frasi, the dancer I mentioned, will hardly be likely to please in England or France. However, as I intend seeing her this evening, I shall be able to judge for myself."

"But may not the person who gave you that unfavourable opinion be prejudiced against her?" I said.

"Oh no; of that I am certain," he replied. "I have known him well, poor fellow; in fact, he was a pupil of mine when I was in Milan."

"Why do you say 'poor fellow?'" I inquired.

"Because at present he is in great trouble," he replied. "Indeed when I left his house this morning I felt quite low-spirited. Moreover, I am anxious about him, as he is to make his appearance to-night in a new ballet, and he is almost broken-hearted. I am afraid his *début* will not be a success. The stage, I can assure you," he continued, "is very deceptive. It frequently happens that an individual whose heart is ready to break is obliged, for his bread, to play the buffoon before an audience, who at the time think him the merriest of mortals. It will be somewhat similar with poor Delorge to-night. He is to play the part of zephyr in the ballet of 'Psyche.' You may imagine it will be painful work for him to be skipping about the stage in the light and graceful manner necessary for the part, with a heart as heavy as lead in his breast at the time."

"What misfortune has happened to him?" I asked.

"Delorge, although brought up in Italy, is a countryman of mine," he replied. "He is of no great talent, but a very light dancer. He married a young girl, also a dancer, and they manage between them to make a very respectable living. They are a very affectionate couple, and live very happily together. Their family consisted of three children, the eldest a girl about four years of age, the youngest a baby in arms. They have lately been dancing at one of the small theatres in Milan, the wife's engagement terminating about a month before her husband's. About that time they received the offer of an engagement at Bordeaux; and in case they accepted it, the wife would be obliged to be there at as early a date as possible, but the husband would not be required till six weeks later. They

did not like the idea of parting from each other even for so short a time ; but being very poor, and their engagement in Milan, from the failure of the manager, having been most unprofitable, they accepted the offer.

"The wife started off, taking with her hardly sufficient funds for her journey ; and the husband was to follow as soon as his engagement terminated, and he had received what little money might be saved from the amount the manager owed him. Shortly after his wife's departure the cholera broke out in Milan, the theatre, after an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the manager to keep it open, closed, and the poor fellow lost the whole of the money owing to him. This misfortune was the more terrible to him as it rendered it exceedingly difficult for him to join his wife. Prudence in our profession is seldom carried to any great length, and Delorge is by no means an exception to the general rule. Thanks, however, to the assistance he received from some of his more fortunate professional brethren, and the sale of a portion of his wardrobe, he at last had sufficient money to commence his journey, when premonitory symptoms of cholera appeared in one of his children. Two days later the eldest girl was a corpse, and the second child was attacked by the disease, which also terminated fatally. The poor fellow was now almost beside himself with sorrow ; but his cup of misery was not yet full. He had received a letter from his wife, urging him to join her with as little delay as possible, not only on her own account, but that his engagement would be jeopardised should he longer stay away.

"As Delorge was now penniless, he accepted an engagement for a week in Turin, by which he would be in possession of sufficient funds for his journey ; but on the moment of starting, another terrible anxiety presented itself. The infant, which had been hastily weaned to allow its mother to proceed on her journey, now began to show symptoms of sinking. Its constitution, never strong, could not bear the shock the absence of its mother and its natural food occasioned. Still he had no help for it. Turin was on his way, so securing a place in a vetturino, he started off, taking the child with him. It takes two days to perform the journey from Milan here, and although the other passengers showed him every consideration, the infant suffered greatly from fatigue. On arriving at Turin he obtained the opinion of the doctor of the theatre respecting his child's health, and he, I suspect, only told him part of the truth. He said there was still a probability, though a remote one, of the child living ; all depended on its being able to take nourishment. Somewhat consoled at hearing this, he attempted by all the means in his power to get the child to swallow food ; but he tells me, as yet with very little success. I have not the slightest doubt in my mind the child will not live till morning. Poor Delorge is so anxious about it he will allow no one to feed it but himself ; and there he sits in his room, the gourd in his hand, the baby on his knee, trying to attract its

attention by smiling and talking to it ; while the tears are pouring down his face. So you see what strange anomalies there are in our profession, and how the pathetic and the ludicrous often commingle in a very singular manner."

"You intend going to the theatre to-night, do you not?" I inquired. "I should like much to accompany you."

"It will give me great pleasure if you will," said Mr. Lefevre.

"Nay more, after the first act of the opera is over, in which the new dancer I wish to see has a *pas-seule* before the ballet, I will, if you like, take you behind the scenes, and introduce you to a few celebrities in the place."

It would have been impossible for Mr. Lefevre to have made me an offer which I could have liked better. The stage had always great fascination for me, and I was then as completely delighted with theatrical representations as I was when a boy. I seemed to have forgotten the manner in which my illusions were then broken, and the stage, with all its absurdities, had for me the realism I considered it possessed. Often had I wished to visit behind the scenes, but having hitherto had few theatrical acquaintances, in fact, none, beyond the stage carpenter, by whom my respect for the talents and fidelity of the Dog of Montargis had been so rudely crushed,—I had never had the opportunity. Now, however, I should be able to see all those in whom I was so interested face to face, and converse with them *in propria persona*, that is to say, with those who could converse in French, for I did not then know three words of Italian.

The time at last came for us to repair to the theatre, and Lefevre, who had received a box in the morning from the manager, took me to it, and I impatiently awaited the rising of the curtain, amusing myself the while by examining the house and its details. It was splendid certainly ; but there was a dull, worn look about it which deprived it of a great deal of its beauty. Again, the whole of the theatre being composed of private boxes, gave it a depressing effect, which was still further increased by the scanty light shed by the chandelier in the centre.

At length the opera began. It was neither good nor bad, and at this moment I forget the subject, so little impression did it make on me, although naturally fond of music. Possibly this might have been occasioned by Lefevre chatting with me volubly the while, giving me different details of the actors and actresses as they came on the stage, as well as pointing out to me different celebrities in the body of the house. At length the time arrived for the *pas-seule*, and Lefevre was now all attention, in fact, during the whole of the dance he did not utter one word, his eyes being critically fixed on the dancer the while. When she had concluded, he said,—

"She will not do. Her knees are bad, and she bends them in the *entrechats*. Didn't you notice how clumsily she did them?"

I told him I was but a poor judge of subjects of the kind, though she by no means appeared to me an expert dancer. My reply was truthful enough; at the same time I could not conceal from myself that I thought her a very pretty girl. Moreover, she was favourably received by the audience, though I could perceive no small portion of the applause given her was from a number of young men, evidently her ardent admirers, who occupied some front rows in the pit.

The first act over, Lefevre proposed that we should leave the theatre, and enjoy the fresh air for a few minutes, as the house was intensely hot. I submitted to him whether he did not think it possible the ballet might commence during our absence.

"No fear of that," he replied. "They are far longer here between the different pieces than in France or England. Moreover Frasi will have to change her dress for the ballet, and that, with her, will take no little time, as she is by no means inclined to hurry herself. Let us sit down at the café here and have an ice. Warning will be given us before the curtain is drawn up by a lad sent round with a bell, as a notice for the audience to enter the house."

The ices were now brought, and while we were eating them I asked Lefevre whether he definitely objected to Frasi.

"Not definitely," he replied. "But I think she will not do. As a second-rate dancer she might be worth engaging, as there are some good points about her. To take her at her own valuation would be impossible, as she thinks herself a Montessu, and expects to be paid at the same rate. However, we will go behind presently, and then I can have a little conversation with her on the subject, and see what I can make of her."

A boy presently left the theatre, ringing a bell, and Lefevre proposed that we should return to it, which we did by the stage-door at the back of the house. I have already mentioned that the entrance in front of the house as well as the interior was gloomy; but they were light as day when compared with the entrance at the stage-door. Certainly no manager in Europe could economise oil to a greater extent than it appeared to be in this theatre. So dark was it that Lefevre, who appeared to know the locality perfectly, was obliged to lead me by the hand through many tortuous passages till we reached the wings. These also were in some obscurity, as the oil lamps were all turned upon the stage, which, however, was brilliant enough.

At the moment of our entering, the stage was being cleared for the ballet of "*Psyche*," the music by Stiebelt, which had lately been revived in Paris. It was singular to notice the respect that many of the dancers paid to Lefevre; while others tried to attract his notice in every possible manner. Presently Frasi, dressed for the part of *Psyche*, joined the group, and pushed her way forward till she had reached Lefevre, with whom she immediately entered into conversation. She had evidently left her dressing-room in great haste, for a dirty, shabby-looking woman followed her, with needle and thread in

her hand, and began to tack down different portions of her dress, for, from the violence of the exertions made by these ladies, pins are very apt to fall out. Nothing could be more earnest than the attack she made on Lefevre. What she said I did not, of course, understand ; but she was evidently speaking to him about the engagement. Presently she said something in a low tone of voice, glancing at me at the time, and I, not wishing to appear indiscreet, left them, and proceeded towards a group of coryphées who had collected round something near the stage. I found the object was a male dancer, whom I judged, from his dress of a white muslin tunic, with absurd little emerald-coloured wings on his back, must have been Delorge, who was to take the part of Zephyr. As he sat there he presented altogether a mixture of the painful and the grotesque. On his knee was a sickly child, its probable duration of life evidently not exceeding a few hours, whom he was feeding—or rather trying to feed—with milk from a small gourd he held in his hand, fastened over the thin end with a piece of wash-leather. This he attempted to place in the infant's month, who turned away its head with a faint sickly cry of annoyance. He endeavoured to soothe it with some endearing motherly expressions, but his attempts were vain. He seemed dreadfully distressed at his ill-success, and a tear gathered in the poor fellow's eye and fell, leaving its trace in the stage paint on his cheek.

Suddenly a bell rang, and the orchestra commenced playing the overture. That over, the curtain drew up, and the air of Zephyr, by Stiebelt (so well known in old music books), was played as the cue for Delorge to go on the stage. The poor fellow, occupied with his own thoughts, paid no attention to it, till one of the by-standers recalled him to his senses. He started up hurriedly, and looked wildly around him for a moment. Then placing the infant in the arms of one of the dancing girls who stood near him, he, with a tremendous bound, leaped upon the stage. His appearance was greeted with a loud burst of applause. He could not stop his movements, however, to acknowledge the compliment, but contented himself with attempting to assume an expression of surprise and delight, which made his face to those near him almost ghastly. But another circumstance was noticeable, which increased immensely the contrast between the gay and the painful. In his hurry to go on the stage, Delorge had forgotten to place the gourd also in the custody of some one, and in consequence he was obliged to hold it in his hand the whole time of his dance. It was curious to watch in his different evolutions the tact he used to hide the gourd from the audience, so that in each turn he made, while throwing his arms about, the back of his hand should always be presented to them. But even this solicitude could not keep him from frequently casting his eyes towards the spot where his child was surrounded by the ballet girls. Although he could not see it, its low faint cry reached him, and it evidently went to his heart, for as soon as the dance was over he rushed from the stage,

regardless of applause from the audience which called him forward. Lefevre reminded him how impolitic it would be to offend them, and recognizing the justice of the remark, he went on the stage to make his bow. I never saw the expression on a human being's face change as rapidly and abruptly as his did at the time. A look of violent rage first betrayed itself at the idea of again going forward, which changed to a placid, grateful smile when before the audience, and was succeeded by one of heartfelt sorrow as he left the stage and caught sight of the infant, the whole not occupying more than a few seconds.

The infant was again placed in his arms, and Frasi came forward, listening to the music for the moment when she was to dart upon the stage. In the interim she looked down at Delorge, and said something encouraging to him which I did not understand, but to which he shook his head mournfully as if she were in error. Then spreading out her skirts, with the assistance of her dresser, and casting another look at poor Zephyr, she crossed herself reverentially, and uttering some short imploration to the Virgin, generally used by dancers in those days, to obtain applause, mixed most probably on the present occasion with an unuttered prayer for the soul of the child so soon to depart, she placed the dancer's smile on her countenance, and went on the stage.

Two or three times afterwards had Delorge to make his appearance during the ballet, and of course had to give up his child to the custody of one of the girls, but not again did he forget to deliver up the gourd with it. To say the truth, the scene was so painful to me that, much as I had been interested in the stage and its surroundings, I felt so sick at heart that I left Lefevre and went round to my box in front of the house. When seated there, watching the termination of the ballet, and the gyrations of poor Delorge, with the set smile on his countenance, the idea struck me more forcibly than ever of the hollowness of the stage. At the same time, I now felt an interest in it which I did not possess before. The idea of the sublime and the ridiculous, the gay and the painful, selfishness and charity, all which, during my short visit behind the scenes, I had witnessed, promised me abundant source of amusement and study. I determined, therefore, to become better acquainted with the stage, and that determination I carried out to the full. It has always been to me a source of unfailling amusement and interest, which, even now, as an old man, is not one jot less than at the time I witnessed the performance of the "Dog of Montargis; or, the Forest of Bondy," and beheld with reverence and respect the crabbed, ill-tempered old woman I, when eight years of age, used to admire when playing the benevolent and majestic Queen at the Surrey Theatre.

THE ODD TEN MINUTES.

No. II.

TESTS OF GREATNESS.

IF all the untested generalisations and connotations that are accepted in the world were brought to book, and, when found wanting, ordered to execution, there would be much slaughter. Only platoon firing on a large scale would meet the case. When we use the words, "a great man," have we any definite idea of what we mean? Here, I foresee somebody will make answer, "No, not a definite idea; but a workable one." Now, fine words are all very well, but not if they help us to err and go astray like lost sheep, when we might do better.

I remember reading that all great men are great eaters. Does anybody believe this? Yet there is a share of sense in it. In human beings who do much work, there must be great vital force; the furnace must burn well; and it seems to follow that it must take in plenty of fuel. But after all, that does *not* follow; for it is conceivable that one furnace might have greater power than another of extracting force from the same amount of fuel. One has seen it contended that the mental power of a woman is equal to a man's, because the woman's intellect has less driving power, and works with less waste. As I sat and heard this from a lady lecturer once, I had in my mind a picture which would not have pleased her much—ladies are so serious. It was a picture of Leech's in *Punch*. The train was on the point of starting; all the passengers but two had taken their places; the wife was beckoning madly from her seat in the carriage; the guards and the husband were frantic; but nothing would induce the tall, stout nurse, baby in arms, to hurry to her place. She *would* give the enraged husband a leisurely explanation of the necessity she had felt under of looking after the plate, &c., &c., &c. It is certainly true that (loveable) women are deficient in "driving force;" and long may they keep so, thought I.

However, that is a digression. It has been contended that the difference between genius and ordinary faculty consists in the greater or less power of assimilating certain kinds of nutriment. This looks as if the gulf between producing beef tea and producing an Aristotle could not be very great. (Here the scientific expert turneth up his nose, snorteth, saith: "This sciolist is ill-read; knoweth not of Biology; is in the gall of ante-Evolutional bitterness and the bond of pre-Darwinian iniquity.")

But then, every man of genius is not a great man. I have read, again, that every great man is, by the definition, in harmony with the spirit of the age. But *why* is he? And how are we to know the spirit of the age? What sort of man was Spinoza, and what sort of spirit of the age was he in harmony with? I could easily, but decline at present for good reasons, make out a very puzzling list for you. And even when you had very plausibly made out your spirit of the age and your harmony of your great man with it, I should say, All this is an *ex post facto* hash of uncertainties. I repeat the question, What is the spirit of the age? You may think you have got it; and yet all the while some trifle is happening round the corner which will flood the world with quite another "spirit," before the hands have been round the clock. The stone that the builders rejected—and so forth. But I did not mean to be so serious. I was thinking, when I wrote "round the corner," of Sam Weller and Mary: "Ah, my dear, if you know'd who was here, you'd change your note; as the hawk observed to hisself with a cheerful laugh, ven he heerd the nightingale a singin' round a corner," (I have not read *Pickwick* since the Deluge, and daresay that is wrong). But in one thing I am quite serious,—there is always something waiting round a corner with a cheerful laugh; all is influx and efflux; and to say that such a man is great, partly because he is in harmony with the spirit of the age, is only giving one a nut to crack which, ten to one, when cracked is empty.

The first time I ever asked myself what a great man is, was, I remember, when I read Channing on Napoleon Bonaparte. He says something like this: "It would be idle to inquire whether he was great or not; the man who, in a few years, has changed the face of Europe has taken out of our hands the question whether he shall be called great." Here, then, was a first glimmer of guidance. We call a man great primarily with reference to the force he shows. But there is necessarily great uncertainty in all such classifications. It is possible, nay, arguable, that Watts's Divine and Moral Songs have had as much effect on the world as Napoleon's victories, but I hope no one would call Watts a great man.

And I also hope no one will take this playful chatter of mine for more than it is meant for.

CHARLES LAMB'S LEISURE.

It is good for us to know and admire the beautiful heroism of Lamb's life; but it is also good to recognize openly that he partly broke down under the strain of the situation. His elder and more selfish brother John wanted to put poor Mary in a madhouse; and it is conceivable (I do not say probable) that this might have been better for her, and for Lamb too, if he would have acquiesced in it. But, if

he had done so, he would not have been Charles Lamb. The capacity for the self-devotion which he showed towards his sister was part of his choice nature, and the fact that he had it is a permanent possession for us all.

But what an awful strain there must have been upon him all those years! And he not only kept, unto the end, the vow he made in Mary's behalf, he kept the vow he made concerning his own name—"I will not shame thee, gentle name!"—that is, he kept it with an approach to complete fidelity. He sometimes frets and is miserable,—very; and no wonder. Once, at least, he says he thinks it would be better if Mary were dead; and it was a shockingly plausible thing to say; *from the first* there are lines of irritability—and worse—about Lamb's mouth, and he could bite, upon occasion. A very few of his witticisms were cruel. But it is not until quite late in his mournful life that we arrive at the lesson that we must not expect too much of each other.

Considering how he had longed for leisure, considering his rapture when set free, yet in the full vigour of maturity and producing-power so far as dates show; considering his mental resources; considering his friendships, and what men his friends were;—the picture his own words give one of his manner of life in his later days is surely one of the most mournful ever drawn. We must, indeed, remember that there was a suspicion of madness in him, too; and that he could not (as he says) sit down and think for long together. This is much, but more must be laid to the fact that he had been over-worked and had borne so much. His leisure came too late. I do not wish to imitate the man who wrote an essay on "What Lady Macbeth might have been had her Energies been properly Directed;" and it is probable that there was some want of self-directing power in Lamb. But that a scholar, a humourist, a poet, an art-critic, a good man rich in choice friends, should find his leisure a burden, should even misemploy it,—seems incredible (in spite of perhaps other examples of the kind). When I call Lamb a scholar, I do it knowing very well that his attainments were limited. But, for all that, he was a scholar; his range of knowledge was evidently great (in spite of Coleridge's rude jest and his own banter). There was no door of acquisition shut upon him, and he was really a thinker. Leigh Hunt might well say his head was worthy of Aristotle or Bacon; and Mr. Forster may well add that there is scarcely a sentence of his which cannot be proved to be crammed with thought. And yet he goes and dies of the miseries, pining for a return to his Leadenhall Street bondage, and getting up the steam on "Dutch courage" a great deal too often.

It is a spectacle to humble us. The moral present to my mind is that we make woeful mistakes by habitually thinking of a man as made of soul and body in such a way that the soul has unlimited

power over the other, if he only *wills* it so. But I shall get at loggerheads with the Right and the Left, and the Left Centre, and the Right Centre, and the whole lot, if I pursue *that* in this vein.

AND COLERIDGE THEN?

I THINK I overhear some one saying, "And how about Coleridge? Don't you wonder even more at *him*?" Well, no, I can't say I do. He had not Lamb's moral fibre; he had not proved his strength as Lamb had proved his. And, on the whole, Coleridge has always struck me as a man of genius who pretty well fulfilled the indications of his own nature. Not so with Lamb. I think if you had at any time put before me Coleridge's works, and also a few anecdotes of him, *accompanied by a portrait*, I should have said, "Very good, what did you expect? This prose is just what you might have looked for. And these incoherent self-reproaches, also. And 'Christabel' is all the better unfinished. And the refuge at Highgate was just what Coleridge wanted, and just what the Gillmans were, you may say, bound to offer." Lamb's story impresses one very differently. And sometimes one cannot help feeling, for a moment, as if his friends must have been wanting to him. He needed no Gillmans to clothe and feed him, and no Southey's to look after his belongings. But could nothing have been done to occupy him and draw him out? However, we must not forget how difficult it must have been to visit at a house in which there was a mad woman—the uncertainties and perplexities that this must have thrown over all frank intercourse with the world without.

MATTHEW BROWNE.

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LORD BYRON AND HIS TIMES.

"Sorrow seems half of his immortality."—*Cain*.

BYRON is not an exhausted subject. For he, though one of our greatest poets, has of late years been under-estimated and neglected in England—a new school of poetry being in the ascendant, mainly an out-growth from Keats, Wordsworth, Shelley, and foreign schools, Italian or French. It is remarkable that, whereas on the Continent neither of these last-named poets (except in some small degree Shelley) has to any extent influenced literature, while Byron has influenced it more than any other English poet except Shakespeare and Pope, among his own Anglo-Saxon people the reverse is true; for I know not any poet of note, English or American, unless it be Edgar Poe, Bulwer, and a quite recent but genuine poet of California, Mr. Miller, whom we may affiliate upon Byron; and these very partially. Of course he has had scores of imitators; but imitators, however popular for a moment, soon perish. I speak of original poets who are generally nurtured in some degree upon their predecessors. Respecting Byron's influence on continental literature, Dr. Karl Elze's life of him* shows interesting research. Hugo, Heine, de Musset, Béranger, and Lamartine, occur at once as instances; but the Slavonic races also have heard his fiery tones and responded in their poetry. Thus "the Russian poet Puschkin has stirred the ardent youth of Russia with a lyre attuned to that of Byron, and the most important Spanish poet of recent times has been termed the Spanish Byron." In England, however, such Byronic growths as may be traced in literature (and there are few) have taken their nourishment from the more morbid elements in him. Notwithstanding his inordinately inorganic form, Mr. Dobell is a very genuine poet; but in the spasmodic school to which he belongs, a strange, half-tragic, half-grotesque figure seems always painfully prominent—the poet namely—at once admiring and bemoaning himself, torn asunder by his own passions, and loudly arraigning his Maker, as it were in the market-place, for making him so very disagreeable a person both to himself and to his neighbours.

There is little response in our literature, as there is in that of the Continent, to what is strongest and highest in Byron. He is pre-eminently the poet of revolution, and of what the Germans call "world-sorrow." But England is not a congenial home of revolution. There is implied in the Puritanism and Protestantism which dominated

* Life of Lord Byron. By Karl Elze. John Murray. 1872.

our two English rebellions a most conservative and law-abiding principle—one of obedience to authority. If the principle of private judgment as vindicated by Luther, Wyclif, Cranmer, and the Reformers, opened the door to what is now termed Rationalism, yet between them and the later rationalists there is a great gulf fixed;—the former only shifted and restored the fulcrum of that lever which they held to have been displaced by human corruption, the lever of Supernatural authority—the latter threw away that lever altogether. In England, religion and the political constitution have been slowly and gradually liberalized; the Bible, however, remained (how far may we say, remains?) the fulcrum of authority, the rule of faith and conduct. In France, in Italy, in Spain, both religious and political reforms have met with less success, have been crushed in the bud; hence the tendency is to violent explosions in extremes of theory and practice, to what we moderns mean by the principle of revolution.

With respect to *Welt-Schmerz*, Goethe affirms that Byron introduced it into literature; but I think that is saying too much. Rousseau rather is the father of it, though I am not sure we should not say Shakespeare in "Hamlet." Goethe himself in "Werther" and in "Faust" may likewise be regarded as one main source of the same spirit; Jean Paul also, and other contemporaries of Goethe. But there has been so much of it since Byron, in France and Germany, that it is difficult now to recognise Byron as a grand fountain of it in our more recent English literature. It is in Shelley, in Novalis, Obermann, Heine, Musset, Balzac, George Sand. In Carlyle, Clough, Matt. Arnold, and Tennyson's "In Memoriam," how different a semblance it wears! In these it is a reflecting, brooding, recluse-like sorrow, serene Wordsworth even traceable therein; we behold the half-bewildering, half-apocalyptic suggestions of an ever-developing natural science seething in strange speculations! Access since Byron has also been attained to the great systematic metaphysicians of Germany, whose thought has penetrated, at least by infiltration through their German and French popularizers, to the stolid practical but rather obtuse English mind,—these metaphysicians, together with Schiller, Goethe, and the German critics, constituting the Teutonic element in that vast intellectual and moral upheaval, which characterized the opening of the grand European era we name Revolutionary; and as German ideas permeated France and England, so, thank Heaven! are French and English principles of social change now conquering Germany, in spite of Bismarcks, Moltkes, and Emperor Williams. Moreover Orientalists have made known to us the mighty religious philosophies of the East. Carlyle is a great prophet of *welt-schmerz* and of individualism too, though he is most severe on Byron because of his lamentations. Yet Mr. Morley, with some reason, calls Carlyle "Byron with shaggy breast." Certainly in Carlyle one feels less of insatiable vanity, less of hunger

after personal enjoyment, less of disordered digestion. He has been one of the strongest and most purifying prophets of our age, to whom the gratitude of any generous pupil must be unfailing. But his stern and solitary Stoic pride has passed now, one fears, into something of crabbed harshness. He has ever held up to us Goethe as the great modern hero in life and in literature. While of Byron, hear what he says :—"A strong man of recent time fights little for any good cause anywhere, works weakly as an English lord, weakly delivers himself from such working, with weak despondency endures the cackling of plucked geese at St. James', and sitting in sunny Italy in his coach and four, writes over many reams of paper the following sentence with variations, 'Saw ever the world one greater or unhappier?' This was a sham strong man."

Now if Byron's actual career be remembered, and we shall presently remind our readers of it, this will seem nothing but a marvellous and most unwarranted caricature. Yet even when Byron is most absorbed in his own sorrow—and very surely he is not always so absorbed—he is unconsciously and by force of genius the mouth-piece and representative of those who [like our own selves, how often in this epoch of weary individualism !] feel the weight and burden of all this unintelligible world pressing upon their heart. He is the Human Soul with infinite longings that nothing finite can satisfy, yet finding nought that it can recognise as indeed infinite to rest upon. Cease your vain whinings after enjoyment ! says Carlyle ; if you suffer, like the Spartan boy conceal the ravening agony and say nothing. What right hast thou to happiness, even to being ? Possess thy soul in patience and work ! This is noble and well ; so far as it goes better than Byron. But this in Carlyle rests on a faith, such a faith as Byron had not. And there are perhaps objections to this too stoical repudiation of happiness. May it not tend to some undue acquiescence in the unhappiness of others ? May it not tend to repress that "enthusiasm of humanity," which must at least include the desire of imparting happiness to all. It at any rate rather suggests fox and grapes. This ascetic independence of human sympathy and approbation, as of all innumerable nature-provided *external* springs of enjoyment, this haughty assiduous self-culture, may possibly result in a certain lonely callousness of heart ungladdened and ungraced with tenderly humane sensibilities, in a certain stern self-satisfaction which may not really be more noble than the self-loathing of a Manfred. "Thus I trample on the pride of Plato," said Diogenes, treading on the philosopher's purple robe. "With greater pride, Diogenes," replied the sage.

In Carlyle surely the bitter wailings over man's present condition are even deeper than Byron's—and fully as misanthropic—while he hardly manifests the same generous ardour of sympathy toward the efforts of mankind, however ineffectual, to free themselves

from oppression, and enter upon the heritage of their manhood. Byron was a miserable man amongst miserable men, but their helpful brother in the blind groping toward light. This latter, indeed, Carlyle strives and means to be; and he is miserable enough; but perhaps he too much ignores the common and irrepressible instincts of human nature, calling man to impossible heights of renunciation and self-centred contentment, refusing to aid them in attaining humbler human happiness more within their reach. A school-master's rod for the foolish, naughty masses of men! Surely the moral *dragonnades* of his fierce invectives against the criminal classes (in "Latter-Day Pamphlets") are almost inhuman in their indiscriminating pitilessness—further from Christ's "God be merciful to me, a sinner," than anything of Byron's. Yet one differs unwillingly from one's teacher and superior. Carlyle seems to me altogether a more admirable hero than his later model Frederick, the great drill-sergeant. But happiness is, though not the *whole* of our being's end and aim, yet an integral part of it. What Byron lacked was a sane mind in a sane body. He thirsted unduly after pure enjoyment, without that necessary shadow of pain which must accompany it; and he did not, as Carlyle justly points out, face that pain so courageously as he should have done; yet a more iron nature must allow for the acute sensibilities of such a man; he was one nerve for pleasure or for pain to travel over,—and surely such a nature is not without its rare uses in the world. Besides, albeit too ostentatiously and with too much weeping, he *did* defy and endure his anguish after all, as do his heroes; he, in addition, silencing it altogether at the last—in order to set right the time "out of joint" (which necessity, laid on him by Duty, this contemplative man, like Hamlet, must have felt to be "a cursed spite"), actually laying down the pen and taking up the sword—nay more than the sword, for which he had some love, the prosaic entanglement of practical politics also, for which he had none, and showing therein admirable good sense. I do not find that Goethe, for instance, had the smallest inclination to do anything of the sort,—showed any keen interest even in the piteous struggles of his fellow-men—that he left to his great rival Schiller, to Fichte, and Theodor Körner; though indeed Goethe, in his most immortal work, "Faust," as in "Werther," and his best drama "Goetz," is not the serene Olympian, the pure artist, which is apparently what Mr. Carlyle admires in him. But Byron knew not moderation or self-restraint; he was so spiritually infirm as to gratify every whim; thus came satiety and remorse. Mazzini, the illustrious Duty-loving apostle of these latter days, whose life was one long sacrifice for human welfare, and who yet never pandered for his own advantage to popular errors, takes a far juster view of Byron, and in spite of all his faults reverences in him not only the great poet, but the noble man. Of his characters, Mazzini says, "They are gifted with ability they know not

how to use ; with a power and energy they know not how to apply ; with a life whose purpose and aim they comprehend not. *They are alone*, this is the secret of their wretchedness and impotence. They thirst for good, but cannot achieve it ; for they have no mission, no belief, no comprehension of the world around them. They have never realised the conception of *humanity* ; the continuity of labour that unites all the generations into one whole ; the common end and aim only to be realised by the common effort. The emptiness of the life and death of solitary individuality has never been so powerfully and efficaciously summed up as in the pages of Byron. His intuition of the death of a form of society, men call wounded self-love ; his sorrow for *all* is misinterpreted as cowardly egotism. Whilst Byron withered and suffered under a sense of the wrong and evil around him, Goethe attained the calm—I cannot say of victory—but of indifference. ‘Religion and politics,’ said he, ‘are a troubled element for art. I have always kept myself aloof from them as much as possible.’ The day will come when democracy will remember what it owes to Byron. I know no more beautiful symbol of the future destiny and mission of Art than the death of Byron in Greece. The holy alliance of poetry with the cause of the people—the union, still so rare, of thought and action—the grand solidarity of all nations in the conquest of the rights ordained by God for all his children—all that is now the religion and the hope of the party of progress in Europe, is gloriously typified in this image.”

Indirectly Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Newton, Locke, and Bacon ; more directly, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Pope ; later still, Helvetius, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Encyclopædists, had, as spokesmen of their time, rudely shaken the venerable but decrepit fabrics of religion and society—because in truth the Divine Life once in them was no longer there, was secretly creating for itself newer and sounder habitations. The structure was unsound at heart, eaten to the core, though it still might stand externally sound and fair. Religion took the side of evil, the side of the powerful oppressor, of the tyrant ; she imposed dogmas moreover upon men, that daily grew more incredible with the progress of discovery, and hoped still to stunt the intellect and conscience of mankind with bands and swaddling-clothes belonging to their infancy. Europe felt the shock of revolution and trembled. Nevertheless, when the allied nations had overthrown the mighty dictator, Napoleon,—that Titan sprung from the loins of revolution, governing in the name of the people, and at least ostensibly in their interest, disposing of Europe in his own anarchic fashion, with little regard to the consecrated pretensions of ancient priests or ancient kings,—there came a reaction, and lo ! the old orthodox spirit returned with seven others more oppressive than itself. “The Holy Alliance considered it not unholly to leave unfulfilled the promise given to nations in the hour of trial,

to beat down by force of arms their right to self-government, which had been bought at the price of much precious blood, and to treat nations at their congresses like herds of cattle." When the Holy Alliance (says Gervinus) believed that it had arrested for ever the aberrations of the spirit of revolution by the subjugation of France, then this English poet knit again the thread, which a million of soldiers had been called forth to sever for ever. The state of the world was one great dissonance, and Byron, who possessed the special organ of its expression, became the poet of this crisis. That he had sacrificed his life for Greece and freedom, surrounded his name with a halo of glory: this martyr-death became an inspiring theme for poetry and passion. And what, after all, if in this and other acts of his life, there was some imaginative taste for artistic *effect*, some desire, it may be, of applause? Is that so very shocking? Human motives are mixed, and by mixed motives human progress is secured. There are aspects of human affairs other than the moral.

Byron stood prominently before mankind, a man of high social position, and even with aristocratic proclivities—in this too meeting his time half-way, for the reformers of the Continent were often aristocratic like himself—with romantic and fascinating personality, a man of the world as well as a cosmopolitan poet, obtruding his defiant revolt and uncompromising individuality no less in life than in poetry. An exile from England, he openly assisted the Carbonari of Italy, and in every way proved himself the friend of human freedom all over the world. No wonder that the liberal youth of the Continent were stirred profoundly by his words and example. Italy and Greece are free. But how disappointing often were the results of youthful enthusiasm and aspirations! More fruit was expected from sweeping political changes than could in the slow growth of human history possibly result—even if the changes themselves were found practicable or beneficial. Healthy desire for self-government was repressed under tyrannical rulers where these retained or regained the power, and here intelligent youth was forced to champ the bit, resorting perforce to more animal, selfish, and sordid outlets of activity. The boundless spirit of discontent let loose over the world caused more unhappiness than the former submissive acquiescence in any lot, however degraded. The old world was passing from under men's feet—but where was the promised land? Shouting "freedom," men but "wore the name engraven on a heavier chain. The sensual and the dark rebel in vain."

The right of private judgment, as vindicated by the Renaissance and Reformation, was pushed to such an extreme, that not so much the higher individual with his own special, rational ideal, in essential harmony with all others, was enthroned, but rather the capricious anti-social disorganizing individual—which exaggeration by inevitable reaction leads to the riveting of new dogmatic chains upon the

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limbs of unemancipated humanity, and so to renewed triumph of corrupt hierarchies. In proportion to a man's enlargement of intellect and intensity of sympathy was his sorrow; man was—nay, still is—a discord and burden to himself—that is, if he be more than a mere animal, or selfish member of the privileged classes—if his mind march in harmony with the progress of the “world-spirit.” So far as in Byron's day the general conclusions of modern science, born in the 15th and 16th centuries, shone for all, they only served to flicker dim distrust from afar upon time-honoured convictions and serviceable beliefs: it is only recently that Science, descending from her altitudes above the crowd, begins to hold forth a promise of reconciliation with ancient indestructible Faith. But for Byron all is still doubt, negation, and despair. Nor can he whistle, and chatter, and grin more or less complacently and comfortably over the human welter like a Voltaire or a Diderot: in fact the storm has burst since then; one can no longer nestle in old cosy nooks of courts that one is helping to shake about the ears of one's children; “After us, the deluge,” but the deluge has come. “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,” will not quite satisfy Rousseau and Byron.

Yet negation and despair have never in any general sense been so unmingled in England as they were with Byron. Since German criticism, our scepticism is more profound and general than before; yet is it more philosophical, quiet, and discriminating than his, feeling its way, in however tentative a manner, to a reconstruction of religion, not on the whole attempting to shatter it altogether. Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Tennyson, for instance, poets of faith, though they were ignored as long as possible, have now more influence over our spiritual life than Byron. Byron's mocking, half-earnest, half-eighteenth-century temper is ill in accordance with our present attitude—scepticism is reverent in an age which has produced such earnest and illustrious Christians as Newman and Maurice. But the English public of Byron's own day were less tolerant of his irreligion than the same public is now. The legal authorities were on the point of refusing to protect his publisher's copyright in the case of “Cain” and the “Vision of Judgment.” If Christianity is by our leading thinkers politely ignored, at least it is ignored *politely*. Our tendency to vindicate the glory and dignity of the body as against orthodox asceticism is, however, a return in Byron's direction. And there are symptoms of reaction against that elaborate artificial affectation of poetic style which is characteristic of an age in England that calls itself *practical*—fairly domestic, devoted heart and soul to those material gains, which involve, on the one hand, a population of grimy native helots, who, being degraded from their higher humanity, murmur, yet forbear from violence; and, on the other, a population of Judases ready to sell their very Master (in the “dearest market”) for thirty pieces of silver, or less—each individual and the whole nation

being careless of the rights or wrongs of any neighbour. From this sort of public life our poets withdraw themselves into studies and studios, and by the help of culture, criticism, and revived antiquity, elaborate their native tongue, as a recent critic in the *Quarterly* observes, into the most celestial of Chinese; in which I think we partly discern, indeed, the result of richer thought and more complex imaginative feeling, but chiefly that of deficient interest in action, and deficient variety of true passion. Feeling and thought lose themselves in tortuous labyrinths of wordy filigree, ostensibly provided for their *habitat*; one sickly sentiment is diluted homœopathically in oceans of what is called "exquisite expression." The literary influences at work to produce this result may be traced up through Mr. Tennyson to the sources I indicated at the beginning; though Mr. Tennyson's own lyrics are among the most exquisite in the language; and he himself is a master of *true expression*, for he has much to *express*; indeed his sovereignty over language and metre is wonderful; but he has an occasional mannerism which is dangerously catching, and which inferior writers are sure to exaggerate. Still his high Miltonic standard, both of poetic substance and artistic workmanship, has raised the whole general tone of English writers and readers, and to him we owe all grateful allegiance. But Byron had formed his style on Pope and Dryden, two great models of clear, nervous English; and it would certainly be well if we studied them more, together with Milton, Wordsworth, Scott, and Byron himself.

One more word as to this element of *welt-schmerz* which the Continental critics justly conceive to be so eminently characteristic of Byron. Nearly all great writing, we must remember, nearly all great art, has been sorrowful or tragic. Even the favoured youthful Greeks, with their healthful unconsciousness and exquisite instinct in harmony with their surroundings, once out of Homer's heroic age (and there is high tragedy in Homer), have their great dramatists composing terrible dramas of relentless overwhelming Fate. Turn to the grand Hebrew poets. What of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Solomon? Then, if we except our own early poet Chaucer, and examine the most illustrious of Christian poets, we shall be led to the same conclusion. Take Shakspeare, Dante, and Milton—Shakspeare, with all his rich humanity and buoyant humour, how profoundly sorrowful, terribly tragic! "*Wo du das genie erblickst erblickst du auch die martyrs krone.*" It was the Olympian Goethe who said that. But our gods are not the pagan Olympians. Our God is the Man of Sorrows; and we hold His life and death to be more godlike than any Greek contentment with any present lot, however enviable. We ourselves suffer more; new ideas, new imaginings, new endeavours entail a heritage of more complex pain, bewilderment, and disappointment; we can no longer lead the gay healthful life of a Greek; and if we were ever so favoured, how, since

Christ, shall we be happy when so vast a proportion of our brethren are miserable, for has not Christ taught us that even Helots and barbarians are our brethren? "*Une immense espérance a traversé la terre*"—henceforth unrest is the law of our existence, and what if the Star of Hope has set? It is here, we believe; but for Byron, labouring in the deep trough of a dark billow of the world-ocean, the huge travelling wave of sorrow had blotted it away! And how, asks Mr. Symonds in his brilliant poet's book on the Greek poets, shall a race in its maturity, with centuries of sad history behind it, be joyful? Yet is there much of glory and joy in this history! Nor are we in our old age! For see how in Byron's day Nelson and Wellington fought—how we have taken and held India, and colonized the world—how Livingstone and our great explorers penetrate the heart of mysterious continents—how ghostly ramparts of the old world's seclusion fall at our mere presence, as the strong walls of Jericho fell before the trumpet-blast of Israel! But in advanced civilizations, with over-swollen luxury of the few and contrasted misery of the many, the noblest must be saddest—especially students, who live that unhealthy life which exaggerated division of labour, and a sedentary habit, has entailed upon them. To this must be added a peculiar, wild melancholy characteristic of Northern peoples in their damp chill atmosphere and dark romantic scenery, that melancholy which we feel in solemn purple mountains, umbrageous forests, turbulent grey seas, and which has passed alike into the primitive national songs, into the glory of Gothic cathedrals, into the taciturn rugged character of our common people. Moreover in Byron there was a lingering belief in that very distinctive orthodoxy which he denied—even in the doctrine of everlasting punishment, and a revengeful God, which he denounced so vehemently—those Pagan monstrosities which the world will be well rid of at whatever cost. Nevertheless, good service as he has done us herein, these dogmas still manifestly haunted him; and if Calvinism be, as it certainly is, the most reasonable of orthodox creeds, it assuredly is a gloomy one. Nor had Byron the power of thought necessary for shaping for himself that eternally true creed anew; but in the form of some illogical semi-theistic fatalism it still appears in his writings, in his conversations, in his conduct. And after all, must we not sorrowfully reject Maurice's magnificent version of Christianity? Is it not an awful *fact* that sin and sorrow, and then sin and sorrow again in grim endless convolved perplexities, do engender their own infernal selves for ever and for ever!! Lethe, forgetfulness, "surcense of sin and sorrow," this poet's heroes crave—and alas! never find it.

The concentrated gloom of many Puritan generations on the one hand, and many half insane lonely barbaric nobles on the other, haunted his brain like some phantom mist, waiting only to be summoned into most palpable Horror by individual experiences of the

man—which assuredly were not wanting! In the very face of his unbelief, nay in the very face of his personally unsensitive conscience as to those carnal excesses which Christianity brands with severest reprobation, his sense of guilt is in some moods manifestly overwhelming; almost equal to that of St. Paul—or if you prefer it, reminding one of Judas!

Of Byron personally we have but to remember that his own early youth was nourished by stern dark influences of Northern sea and sky, and heath-clad rocky mountain—in a land populous with weird legend—pride of race was in his blood—pride of the old Barons Byron, and the yet more illustrious ancestry of his impoverished mother; she who taught the sullen brooding child to be so conscious of his high position and to resent the disproportion between his fallen fortunes and the greatness of his house; she who, while injudiciously fond, yet taunted him with his lameness when angry—a lameness that so treated might well help to make him bitter. What an education was this boy's, who needed such extrajudicious and kindly moral training! But fierce and ungovernable as his mother's moods were, his grandfather's had been the same—he who killed his neighbour in a savage duel by candle-light, and lived afterwards, grimly secluded in the old abbey at Newstead, shunned and gloomy, and accused of half insane eccentricities (himself a very Lara), as the boy heard when he and his mother arrived at their ancestral abode, so ancient, lonely, and ruinous. With dim traditions and ghost-tales of old monks hovering about the place, and emblazoned arms of warriors on the windows, what wonder if this boy poet imbibed an air of mystery and mediæval romance? What an exquisite description has he given of his early home in “Don Juan,” showing how profoundly it had impressed him! As for his father, he was a handsome *roué* like Don Juan himself. How must the modern revolutionary spirit have contended in this man for mastery with the temper of a haughty English aristocrat—the haughtier for his poverty,—with the epicurean tastes moreover of a beautiful dandy, and petted child of high society!* But he needed the stimulus of insult, of

* There was indeed the feudal independence of a lawless baron piercing through his post-revolutionary humanitarianism, both in conduct and in poetry. It is true that he hated the stupid traditional orthodoxy of Legitimists, but he sincerely liked those imposing despotisms that are on one side the modern offspring of old tyrannies. He admired Napoleon; loved to imitate and be compared with him; admired Ali Pacha, and thought of setting up a Pachalik himself on some Greek island; if he had been offered the crown of Greece at the congress of Salona, to attend which he was on the point of setting out when he died, Trelawny and Dr. Elze both think he would have accepted it. He burst out crying from flattered vanity when his name was first read out with “Dominus” before it at Harrow—he hated people to call him by his name without the lord. He quarrelled with our ambassador at Constantinople on a point of precedence. He would not land at Malta because he expected a salute from the forts, and finally sneaked into La Vallette without it, as Galt relates with a

rejection, of opprobrium, to rouse the slumbering lion, to develop his mighty genius in the direction proper to it.

The "Hours of Idleness" are melancholy and querulous, but they have no concentrated bitterness or agony. He says himself, he should "never have worn the motley mantle of the poet, if some one had not told him to forego it." The taste of his true quality comes out first in the "English Bards;" though even that is chiefly noticeable for wounded vanity and talent in the region of sarcasm. After this he travelled, on his return publishing successively the "Tales," and "Childe Harold." In these he put himself forward under thin literary disguises as a melancholy hero of romance, and a *roué*: and the result was, that he "woke one morning and found himself famous:" never was there such sudden and general popularity, partly due, no doubt, to the fact that he was a peer, and a *parti* who mixed freely in society, with the special recommendations of beautiful face and figure, "interesting" genius, *spirituel* conversation, and the vague reputation of being charmingly wicked; so he got as much petting as any reigning belle; and gave himself airs accordingly. But he was soon to pay the penalty of good fortune. He had been over-praised for the work he had actually performed, and he had, moreover, made enemies among men and women by his successes and his affectations, though chiefly no doubt by his sterling merits, which men, and especially literary men, were not likely to forgive. He had married a truly excellent and noble lady, who perhaps wished to reform him, but soon retired in disgust from a task which she found so far beyond her powers: this marriage, with little affection and with no mutual comprehension or toleration, was soon broken up; and then, no one knows exactly how, the darkest rumours gathered about the husband; bursting anon over his head in a tempest of most virtuous execration, wherein the notoriously sensitive holiness of English society in the days of the Regency showed itself, like Hamlet's mother, "much offended." Byron, indeed, fancied there might be some cant in all that, having himself seen something of this holiness when it sat knee to knee with him, cheek by jowl with him, drinking, and ogling—though Mrs. Stowe appears to believe in it. The fact is, he had no business to be a genius, and to sin out of the regular grooves in which it is proper and respectable for good society and the *bourgeoisie* to sin. So villanous fashionable seducers, and fraudulent domestic tradesmen, "compounded for sins they were inclined to, by damning those they had no mind to," and waved him aside as less pious than themselves. And he who confessed that the meanest thing's blame gave him more pain than the highest man's praise gave him pleasure—how must he have winced under the insult and opprobrium

chuckle. The pomp of his travelling arrangements after the separation was excessive and worse than absurd, for the meanest thing he ever did was to use his wife's fortune after that event.

that raged around him, even though he, in his heart, contemned most of the righteous amateur inquisitors who inflicted punishment. The finest skins are the most sensitive—what a triumph for vermin! No doubt there are men of cold, serene, self-possessed temperament, who are as thoroughly independent of their fellows as Byron professed to be, but, as has been said, these do not print so many passionate cantos to inform their fellows of the fact. Why, he winced even when a nameless jackass donned the lion's-skin of some ephemerally popular review, and brayed at his poetry from under it. He could not be content with enduring fame, and the consciousness of good work done—he must needs clutch at immense and immediate reputation, though that was to be shared with him by jugglers and acrobats, literary or otherwise. Hence in part the blot of sensationalism, to catch the uneducated taste for gaudiness of effect, in his work.

Byron, moreover, burnt the candle at both ends. Think what an amount of intellectual labour—and that of a creative kind—of a fierce, emotional, imaginative kind—this man went through before he was thirty-seven! How bulky are his works—and in addition we have the long destroyed memoirs, the innumerable letters sparkling with wit, teeming with observation. Besides he lived always, and lived moreover in early youth, the life of a *roué*. These conditions alone are sufficient when we take into account his highly nervous, excitable, delicate organization, and the deleterious amount of spirits he drank, to explain his fits of depression, his moments of anguish. He was subject, moreover, to constant fevers, than which nothing is more depressing. So that on the whole, considering the utterly different nature and circumstances of the two men, it does not seem as if Mr. Carlyle's reiterated reproach to Byron, that he was no stoic, amounted to very much.

I own I think the "Tales" are underrated by modern critics. All their defects may be granted—they are fragmentary, the plots are ill-constructed, sometimes almost *nil*, they are monotonous, and, above all, there is a certain theatrical hollowness about them, which is indeed the vulnerable Achilles' heel of Byron for his modern detractors. Nevertheless the episodes, even if they be only episodes, are in themselves wonderfully astir with wild life and turbulent passion, the verse is generally musical and rapid, while there is often a pause of softer lyrical beauty with an exquisite perfume of its own, to which Scott far more rarely attains. Thus almost all the passages (though they can be detached and recited as separate lyrics) in the "Giaour" are beautiful, and how lovely are the opening lines about the lovers in "Parisina!" as well as that incident of the page bending over dying Lara. The "Corsair," on the whole, seems to me the finest and most spirited of this series—it has in it all the freshness of youth and buoyant enjoyment, as well as the very spirit of romance and troubadour love; it has women, charming, beautiful, tender, and

passionate ; it has pathos ; it has some of the finest lines that have ever been written about the sea, even by Byron, the bounding clarion notes of the pirate's opening song—"O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea." By some able modern critics, indeed, accustomed to our thoughtful, metaphysical, academic, or domestic strains, all except one phase of Byron's mighty genius (that of "Don Juan," and "Vision of Judgment") has been abandoned, on the ground that it is theatrical, and conventional ; that his heroes are not heroic. Now this has a great deal of truth in it, and Byron acknowledges himself that these early works were too sentimental and stagy. Still, for all that, something may be said even in favour of their general conception, in favour of that central ideal which gave them such unity as they possess.

It does not follow because a myriad dunces have mouthed and still mouth in the trappings of a great actor, and we weary of these trappings, that he was not a great actor. What astonished Walter Scott was this—that Byron, though in "Childe Harold," and we may even say in "Cain" and "Manfred," as well as in the "Tales," he continued to represent only one human figure as the centre of all, could still succeed in forcibly arresting men's attention. In truth, he wears the tragic mask of an actor of old Greek tragedy—set to one monotonous, terrible, or sorrowful expression : his heroes are ideals of human misfortune, sin, woe, and passionate power, that partly recall those of Greek tragedy. This gloomy Byronic hero is now the favourite type of low melodrama in cheap fiction and on the stage—a capital subject for burlesque. Nevertheless, he was at that time a perfectly legitimate and fascinating hero of romance, by virtue of certain obvious and indestructible tendencies to admire very common in human nature. He was in fact a personage of the *same order* as Hamlet, Timon, Faust, and Fouqué's magical creation, Sintram. He must be accepted as a modern descendant of mediæval Barons and Minstrels—truly an *evil* modern Knight, with a conscience restless from remorse, with high gifts of intellect and imagination, thirsting for joy and for pure love, yet clogged with satiety, withered with disappointment, endowed, however, with many knightly virtues, in all the pride of blasted beauty and high lineage degraded—even in the bosom of Nature, the Healer whom he adores as divine, haunted by melancholy wrecks of his own spiritual life. This half knight, half Miltonic Satan, is an embodiment of rebellion against man and God ; yet of reconciliation with both through love of Justice and Mercy ; half in harmony with the modern spirit, half in harmony with the ancient that is passing away ; it has moreover even a moral beauty of its own as of a human ruin stern and lonely in proud decay ; festooned with some of Nature's fairest perennial flowers. But it is eminently romantic and picturesque—Gothic, fantastic ; all light and shadow, mystery, and vast space, flushed

here with gorgeous colours, there grey and severe—neither classical nor flippant courtly and didactic, like poetry of the 18th century; nor moralized, and beginning to be reconciled in its own fashion with the old faith, like Mr. Tennyson's and some of our best poetry now—a transition poetry of tumult and revolt, of volcanic aggressive individualism half reverting to the lawlessness and anarchy of primeval societies; to the Ishmaelite whose hand is against every man; the child of Nature asserting himself against the decadence of an artificial, decrepid, tyrannical civilization wrongfully usurping the titles and thunders of the Most High. This is as truly romantic as Spenser, Walter Scott, Ariosto, or the Minnesingers. "Faust" and "Manfred" are in fact the legitimate descendants of this mediæval poetry—even of the early Mysteries and Miracle-Plays. Moreover, Spenser, and the Italian romantic poets, are quite as luscious in description as Byron—that element they owe in common to the study of later classical literature, Theocritus, Virgil, Ovid—and some of it to that of the East, Byron personally having a good deal of the soft, luxurious Eastern in him, developed by personal experience in eastern climates. [There was at the same time a great romantic movement in Germany, headed by the Schlegels, Tieck, Jean Paul.] It must be recollected further that the old heroes of romance, for the most part *sans peur*, were very seldom *sans reproche*. But the elements of moral mystery, tragical destiny, high gifts rendered abortive and a curse to the possessor, and what may be termed the more superficial graces of these heroes, all these, wrought up with the skill of a Byron, whose "own" the "song" was, form a fine subject for artistic presentation in the romantic region of art—they appeal to the imagination of mankind, to such imaginations as those of Goethe, Shelley, Coleridge, and Scott; although, indeed, the perpetual repetition of such portraitures showed the narrow range at that period of the poet's power. His, indeed, were not self-possessed, self-sacrificing heroes of the highest type, like Schiller's William Tell. But it is not necessary to hold them up as models for imitation, even though Byron may have a vain, self-conscious weakness for these violent, ill-regulated, selfish characters. At any rate, however low morally his poetic ideal might be (and one of his ideals was Washington, as he tells us in a splendid stanza of "Childe Harold," and as we might know by his life), the question for criticism is how far his figures are portrayed with the hand of a master; and it was certainly because he could identify himself with them in some moods that he portrayed them so well. Whatever an artist can render artistically interesting by art, that is a proper subject for art; it becomes imaginative truth; but the error of certain writers has been to distort some lower elements of human nature by making them relatively too prominent, and not duly contrasting them with other elements. Byron made himself in "Childe Harold," not too

obtrusively, the centre of his graphic and imaginative descriptions of countries over which centuries of stirring and splendid history expand wings of dusky glory, and surely the brooding melancholy figure was no inappropriate centre; a beautiful genius of death, of sorrow, and of unrest. Ever he held up before the world a vast and lurid Human Image; but too thoroughly aware of its own dignity, and contemning others—herein reverting to the philosophic pride of elect spirits as inculcated by Paganism, and adapted thence by doctors of theology into Christianity, under the guise of religious Pharisaism, but retrograding from the true Christian ideal of election to universal service—scarcely malignant, yet formed to be the ruin of all who approached; like Job deserted in his calamity, yet justifying himself in the face of Heaven as against hypocritical moral verdicts of his fellows; communing alone in whirlwind and cloud with phantoms of departed heroes, and vanished empires—Harold in starlit palaces of the Caesars, among ivied rents of ruin, or upon the solitary sea-shore—Manfred upon some desolate Alp, conversing familiarly with spirits of the elements; for whom the very countenance of Love herself has been contorted into the Gorgon-face of Crime, Crime with fury features and snaky hair. In what terrible harmony is this figure, half-man, half-demon, with these blasted crags that surround him, born of old in throes of earthquake and in fire, snowed upon out of the slow centuries, shrouded in oceans of implacable ice! So looms this awful Image out of the stormcloud, as though stricken with the curse of a hateful immortality; wandering through all lands; bearing the burden of a world's sorrow; wailing the wail of human misery; like Prometheus on Caucasus scarred with Heaven's lightning, and blistered with His frost, agonizing for sins inherited and imposed; but, alas! bearing no message for human redemption; no conscious martyr-conqueror of sacred fire from divine altars, wherewithal to regenerate the race; only lifting ever a red right hand with Cain, and huge scowling armies of the outcasts—rebel leader of all who are miserable, fate-stricken, and oppressed—testifying in the face of God and men that all is not well, as the comfortable have decreed, though they feast with a smile over buried bodies of their victims.

It seems to me uncritical to draw too broad a line of demarcation between the early and later works of Byron, though it is unquestionably right to prefer the later; but the same identical, intense, passionate, susceptible, scornful soul appears in all. And it is part of the very essence of this strange shroud of romantic half-chivalrous mystery wherewith Byron loves to invest his characters, and through them indirectly his own personality, that there should glow, as it were, doubtfully through the folds thereof a certain deadly lurid light of guilt unnameable, whose inborn fatality overwhelms the soul with despair, and leaves the man no rest. This is especially the

element that is now inveighed against as poisonous and satanic—now indicated as claptrap and humbug.

But it may be argued that as Byron has used the blood-red hue, it is a perfectly legitimate, as well as effective, element of tragic interest in his work of art. Toned down to harmony with other features of the picture, represented as in some sense a mysterious doom, guilt, and the misery which it works in a soul not destitute of virtue and aspirations after a higher life—this element in Byron appears to me neither immoral, nor inartistic, nor ridiculous. Is it the duty of the artist always to hold up before us models of excellence for imitation? If so, of course we must condemn Byron, and enthrone Miss Edgeworth or Mr. Tupper. But then what of Othello and Iago, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, the Duchess of Malfi, and most of those other mixed humanities of Elizabethan drama? What of *Œdipus* and *Medea*? indeed of all the greatest masters in imaginative creation? Byron's representations do not, I think, ignore the *difference* between good and evil any more than those of Shakspeare do, though they may indicate laxity in his own estimate of what is right and wrong, in certain respects. I do not see, for instance, that he violates the conditions under which evil may be represented, even as laid down in the very rich, and delicately discriminating essays of Mr. R. H. Hutton; only that Mr. Hutton perhaps insists too much (by implication) on the moral aspect of a subject being always prominently presented. That Byron *dwells too much* on the passionate and so far weak class of characters, and that these are not sufficiently balanced by other types, has been admitted; but this is rather a fault in plastic skill than anything else. There certainly arose at that time—Byron and Rousseau contributing much to the phenomenon—a kind of priesthood, which, claiming to displace the old, showed itself scarcely more tolerant and tender in its bearing toward the common people, in favour of whose rights its members had ostensibly arisen, than that traditional priesthood against whose tyranny they so iconoclastically declaimed. Every "man of genius" became a sort of supreme pontiff without a faith, whose whims and weaknesses and peculiar fancies were to be held as sacred—a pretension perhaps more dangerous than those of a regular priesthood, since these were at least defined and confirmed by venerable authorities in the world's face. Sensitive young persons, moreover, persuaded themselves too easily that *they* were within this privileged indefinable circle, being naturally eager to claim a right of participating in such agreeable immunities; so that the ranks of this new priesthood did not want for candidates, whose credentials there existed unfortunately no recognized bishop once for all to verify. Doubtless, then, too much emphasis was laid by Rousseau, Byron, and Shelley, upon mere sentiment, impulse, and passion, as distinguished from conscience, reason, and deliberate self-control. So far as Byronism is to be regarded as an ideal, it is certainly a low one;

though, at the same time, it is unquestionably a higher than that of the average Mammon-worshipping Briton—and on the whole advantageous as a corrective of his—while Byron sets before the Englishman assuredly certain high qualities for which the *élite* of his nation have been deservedly celebrated, and not least that aristocracy to which the poet belonged; nor is it amiss that the average man should learn to reverence genius and superiority, and the glories of external Nature. If Byron lays undue stress on such advantages as those of rank and high lineage—on those of beauty, strength, prowess, or refinement—methinks his work is full of counterbalancing influences; and these things themselves may not be quite so despicable as commonplace levelling down democracy supposes. Science is teaching us not unduly to despise *race*, as instinct had taught us before; moreover, since soul and body are but reverse faces of the same living man or woman, I doubt beauty of body being so execrable a thing as ill-favoured Methodism would persuade us. Then, again, though the protest is a healthy one which vigorous moralists like Mr. Kingsley have made against that foolish, mischievous notion, that men of genius are privileged in their errors and weaknesses, instead of possessing their high gifts for purposes of human service—we must not altogether forget that virtue is not knowledge or sensibility, but rather a due balance of the faculties under a moral sense. Artistic genius is, on the other hand, a very uncommon sensibility and corresponding faculty dominating the possessor: it would certainly be well if with this were always associated that balance and moral sense we call virtue. But is it always so, and is it likely to be generally so? In proportion as sympathies and susceptibilities are acute in one direction, must there be danger of undue predominance, and in proportion to their variety will be the probability of some one interfering now and again with the claims of another. When a man feels a multitude of conflicting impulses, aspirations, and longings, he must be endowed with an exceptionally virtuous spirit in order for him to keep the middle path of virtue as securely and invariably as another. But it does not follow that he must be so endowed. He sees life, and a special phase of life haloed with the aureole of imagination; the reality disappoints him: he then revolts against his condition, and seeks some other, not always with due regard for the claims of a partner, nor with the tender long-suffering he owes her. His mobility of temperament and ardour of imagination are in arms against his constancy and duty.

That men of genius have, for the most part, been unhappy in their domestic relations has been often affirmed and explained, and perhaps cannot well be denied. Happy are they who have proved exceptions! happy in the noble gentle partners God gave them, and possibly in their own highly gifted moral natures. But I do not see why sinners of genius should be inveighed against as *ipso facto* greater sinners than

average men. Shakspeare, for instance, gives one the notion of complete sanity and balanced universality in genius; yet what we know of his history and what we read in the Sonnets does not favour the idea of a perfectly proper person who could have written perfectly proper articles in the *Saturday Review*. There is no use blinking the fact, moreover, that riot, self-indulgence, and the irregular life Byron lived made him just the great specific poetic personality he was—the very interpreter of his time. He drew more than any poet from personal experience, and his strongly marked passionate wandering career gave him the materials of his strongest and intensest poetry. What would this man have done if he had “lived at home and at ease?” if he had gone out shooting all his life with Sir Ralph Milbanke, and only listened over his wine to “that damnable monologue which elderly gentlemen are pleased to call conversation?” He might have gone to church at Kirkby Mallory on Sunday, fulfilling in every way the decalogue, and the whole duty of an Englishman; but he would not have written the concluding cantos of “Childe Harold,” “Cain,” “Manfred,” or “Don Juan;” he would not have been Byron; for Sorrow and Sin trod his spirit as their wine-press, and lo! the blood-red wine of Genius, with omnipotent aroma, expressed in bitter anguish and boundless despair. “They learn in sorrow what they teach in song.” All honour to “deaneries,” and “angels” in balmorals, and clerical lawns for croquet. But volcanoes and earthquakes too are needed, or they would not *be*. “*Wrong*” we may brand the volcano, with its devastation of human cereals, dwelling-houses, and properties in general, very wrong indeed; still “stormy wind,” as well as gentle breeze, “fulfills His word.” All are not fitted for the domestic ideal, though only fools or knaves fail to feel that, when fulfilled by high human natures, it is the very noblest, as, surely with one dear woman and sweet children, it is happiest; the obvious and true ideal of our civilized majority. But in some there remains the wild blood of the nomade, and dweller in tents of Ishmael; these, whether they be artists or explorers, soldiers or sailors, have their true Bohemian function elsewhere, and are simply thrown away upon drawing-rooms and deaneries, however decorous. There are, too, for that matter, women who must be single and are better so; Aspasia here and there it may be; students and devotees of knowledge, monks, ascetics, and such like abnormal persons; hero-martyrs on occasion of some ideal cause; none of them fitted for the honourable incumbence of a family; yet it may easily happen that some of these will mistake their vocation, or perish in the vain attempt to reconcile vocations that prove incompatible. Let not, however, what Mr. Morley calls our “unlovely temple of *comfort*” be regarded as though it were the very temple of God!

But it must have been with some sense of triumphant humour

that Byron (he was a wag, and this must always be borne in mind) proceeded to dispose his magician's robe of stormful misanthropy in becoming folds around him, and, positively by flaunting it all sulphurous with the crime he had been banished for in the face of implacable society, brought this stern stepmother to his feet dissolved in repentant tears! Now I am far from believing that this remorseful guilt was merely invented for purposes of art; it is so essential to the personality he generally delineates, which is substantially his own. Byron is chiefly a *lyrical* poet, as Dr. Elze names him; and I cannot think that he was either immaculate, or the fiend that Mrs. Stowe and other virtuous writers have delineated.

When a man's life is so much before us, as he evidently intended it should be, when he has deliberately expressed so much of it in his poetry, we cannot ignore it; and we owe our best thanks to Dr. Elze, and his highly competent translator, for so lively a summary of what is known as to Byron's biography. If the editor of "Macmillan's Magazine" had not expressed himself so happy to introduce Mrs. Stowe's "strange story" to the British public, that might have been left alone; but Dr. Elze, and even immaculate Saturday Reviewers, have discussed it; so I shall here allude to it in passing.

Byron avers that he never seduced a woman in his life, by which I understand that he never took advantage of a young girl's innocence, deceiving her to her injury. But it is conceivable that he did not feel, any more than Shelley, precisely the same instinctive attractions and repulsions as the majority of mankind in sexual regions. Shelley deliberately defends incest, and Byron certainly does something of the same sort in "Cain." I think with Mr. Rossetti that the evidence on this head is so conflicting that we cannot condemn him. Mrs. Stowe says Lady Byron told her that he confessed and justified the crime to her. I cannot help thinking that Lady Byron unwittingly exaggerated this and many other circumstances of their unfortunate union, in talking matters over with intimate friends, and brooding over her wrongs. So admirable a man of genius, our national glory, and a noble lady of such rare excellence, with so many admirable gifts, as all who knew her agree, [who but fool or knave dare deny them?] alas! what an irony of Fate to bring just these two together! Ascetic purity face to face with sensuality incarnate! If *she* "wanted one sweet weakness, to forgive," how much self-restraint and chivalrous affectionate service did *he* not want? His ideas and actions were revolting to her, his very passionate impulsiveness was so; when he broke a valuable watch out of vexation at their pecuniary embarrassment, this seemed to her one symptom of madness, as did his other eccentricities also; he, because she persistently rubbed his fur the wrong way, and was so rigidly implacable, became exasperated, painted himself to her in the blackest of colours, and delighted the more to shock her. The Guiccioli allows that he confessed to an unusual

warmth of manner towards his sister even in the presence of Lady Byron, which familiarity is, it will be noticed, the only *proof* Lady Byron gave to Mrs. Stowe (for the nonsense about a child, since so amply refuted, I cannot but suppose Mrs. Stowe must have misunderstood). This unusual warmth in a fiery nature like his, where the ordinary demarcations of affection and passion are not so definitely marked as in most men, is conceivable, and would perfectly explain Lady Byron's charge, especially as there were arguments between them, and he would be likely obstinately to justify himself; even accuse himself of actions he had not committed. His own heated imagination even may have magnified his offence—especially when he viewed it under the influence of Lady Byron, he himself not clearly distinguishing his strong affection from passion under the lurid horror reflected from the conscience of society. For Lady Byron evidently did possess influence over him; he respected her greatly, and it is probable even that he drew her likeness in one of the most exquisite descriptions ever penned of a pure woman, that of Aurora Raby in "Don Juan." He was eminently mobile and susceptible, and had there not been too much mutual repulsion in these two natures, had there been true love, she might have permanently influenced him; but she had her own reasons for giving up the task so soon. He seems to have been often cold and cruel to her—at any rate her own instinctive aversions, and perhaps fear for her daughter, worked powerfully upon her; but when her influence was upon him, he would feel as she did; this and the execration of society, if only unbridled imagination had ever transgressed normal limits, would suffice to fill him with very hell-fire of anguish and remorse, especially as he never succeeded in shaking off that orthodox creed against which he rebelled. Thus in "Manfred" we have the most absorbing love (what can be more intense than the passionate invocation of Manfred to the spirit of his sister Astarte?) steeped in self-accusing despair unutterable for the injury he may have done her, for the doom he may have brought upon her in the other life, yea, for her very love which he may have forfeited, *that human love which is his all in all!* His infinite is the finite—and on the bosom of the finite he falls with infinite yearning, a bosom that crumbles in his embrace, so that he falls, falls ever in the void! But, in sooth, the mere accusation and ban of civilized society might be sufficient to inflame Byron's imagination with the idea of such a situation; while his own morbid pleasure in self-accusations of uncommon guilt might have been almost enough originally to rivet such charges upon himself, till he at last deluded even himself into believing them. Mrs. Stowe's version of his reasons for circulating stories about the separation only among his intimates is surely very uncharitable. He might be too incontinent to suppress these altogether, but he might, out of lingering regard for his wife, wish to imitate her *quasi-reticence*, which after

all was a *quasi*-reticence chiefly ; when he worked himself into a fury about his "wrongs," he would, indeed, say anything, but, knowing he exaggerated, with caution. He was a libertine,—and such men are not as delicate as they should be,—a literary libertine who habitually made reprehensible confidences about his own most private affairs. At times, from his fear of further public ignominy if these charges became still more definite than they were, knowing what Lady Byron believed, whether truly or falsely, and had told to some persons, he might even act in the spirit of such a threat as that which he is reported to have used, alluding to Caleb Williams, that *she* should bear all the blame of their separation. Yet, on the other hand, he constantly affirmed that she was not to blame ; but he naturally shrank from such definite charges as would have been brought against him in a public court, knowing that it might be difficult to refute them beyond controversy. Here, as everywhere, he was made up of contradictions insufficiently harmonized : he was a child of impulse, yet could often give impulse and emotion a calculated turn. What could be more inconsistent than to poison the public mind by dark intencoes against himself, in order to make people stare and be "interesting," and then to rant, and rave, and lament in the most eloquent poetry when the public took him at his word ? "Self-torturing sophist" he was, like Rousseau. How he longed for love and tranquillity, and profound affection, and home, and children, and how the demons within him drove him ever out of sight of shore ! Such spiritual weakness arising from want of harmony and balance must ever produce misery. A recent writer has said that what proves him a thoroughly bad man is his abusing one mistress to another ; but these intrigues must not be judged like profound affairs of the heart—a libertine's mistress is not likely to spare her lover after the connection is over, any more than her lover to spare her. Byron was not spared in "Glenarvon," for instance.

Byron somewhere enumerates the crimes of which rumour had accused him, wonderful to say, with a curious mixture of complacency, amusement, and yet by no means affected indignation—among others he mentions those of Tiberius and Heliogabalus. Assuredly some of his own expressions, taken together with certain incidents of his career, may quite as easily have exposed him to scandal and exaggerations of this nature also. A cynical, unsocial person is never very leniently regarded by his neighbours, and genius seems "something uncanny" to the million. All his friendships, he affirms, were passionate. The "Hours of Idleness" abound with passionate addresses to his friends.

"Shall fair Euryalus pass by unsung ?"

"Thy mind, in union with thy beauteous form,
Was gentle, but unfit to stem the storm," &c., &c.

Of Lord Clare, who spent whole summer afternoons with him on the

tomb in Harrow-churchyard, he writes in 1851, "I never hear the word *Clare* even now without a beating of the heart;" and his record of their unexpected meeting on the road between Imola and Bologna that year may well be unintelligible to persons of less intense and fiery temperament. At Cambridge he was deeply attached to a young chorister, and wore a cornelian heart which the boy had given him. At Newstead, also, he felt more than usually warm friendship for the son of one of his tenants; and on his second visit to Athens we hear nothing of the "maid, his life," but his heart went forth to a poor youth named Nicolo Giraud, the son of a widow; while there are some curious expressions in a letter of Shelley about his life at Venice. We can imagine what malevolent gossip might make of all this; but is there any proof that it indicates more than the extravagances of a nature far more impulsive and comprehensive in its range of emotions, than is to be met with every day? Then, again, while on the one hand, he was brave and manly, much addicted to and skilled in physical exercises, devoted to outdoor and athletic pursuits; on the other, he had a very feminine element in his character as in his person. Hunt sneers at the rings he loved to display upon his fingers, and Ali Pacha pleased him by praising his curling hair, together with the aristocratic delicacy of his small ears and white hands. He was once taken for a woman in disguise, and in "Don Juan" he draws an attractive picture of the beautiful hero dressed as an Eastern princess. Not only women, but even men could not escape the magic of his fascination, and Lord Holland's little son called him "the gentleman with the beautiful voice." His countenance, like his spirit, was extra-femininely mobile, says a lady, and he could look positively beautiful one moment, but positively ugly the next,—surely herein his face was a reflex of his soul!

I fancy the English were a little unreasonable to cry out when Countess Guiccioli took up the cudgels for Byron, just after such very damaging statements about him had been published, ostensibly on the authority of his wife. If he turned different sides of himself to the two ladies, it seems hard if both may not be shown. The Guiccioli in her old age, having married an Anglophobe marquis, writes that she found Byron a perfect angel during the six years he was with her, and Lady Byron herself, while analyzing his character somewhat sternly and harshly to one of her friends, (she even says he only feigned enthusiasm, in which case he ought to have been a great dramatist, for he feigned enthusiasm to the life) wept when she heard of his death, owning there was an angel in him. But alas! the Guiccioli loved him, and he loved her, as well, at least, as so libertine and disillusioned a nature could love. The picture is a touching one of him at Ravenna, when she had returned with her husband to Bologna, visiting her garden and rooms at their wonted hour of meeting, reading in her favourite books, and bursting into

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tears before the fountain in the garden, as he reflected what evil his love might bring upon her. This lady reclaimed him from his debaucheries—as long as he lived he was faithful to her—and I think the charge against him of making no provision for her is one quite susceptible of a favourable explanation.

Byron loved two,—Mary Chaworth, and the Guiccioli. Would that he could have married his first love ! In that beautiful poem, “The Dream,” he confesses that her image was in his soul, even when he stood at the altar with another—THAT was the crime of his life in the sight of Heaven, and a black one, however shocking his fleshly vagaries may appear to us ; but *that* is a crime against which civilised society has no conscience. Yet an ideal marriage demands a constancy and stability of soul—of which, alas ! men like Byron and Shelley possess little—chivalrous protectiveness, generosity, magnanimity, memory of the past, faith in the future. To an absorbed ardent spirit the dimming of early rose-colour, and intrusion of fretting trivialities, is very trying ; and Shelley is doubtless right, that *if love dies* the usual vulgar passive acquiescence in a dead contract is—unless from motives of mere expediency or common humanity, which may tell the other way—base and unendurable : a more living love may be sought and found, which, even for the children, may be best.

RODEN NOEL.

(To be continued.)

MR. CARINGTON.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DEATH IN LIFE.

Astrologos. He is where never any birds shall fly to him,
Nor any melody of summer meet his ear,
Nor any message enter, any issue thence
To tell a word of him.

Raphael. All fiends are pitiless :
The imperial Fiend is of all fiends most merciless.

The Comedy of Dreams.

PRINCE OISTRAVIEFF, in the hold of the gunboat, was insensible with fear and pain when that mysterious cruiser ran into a Mediterranean port. At a signal from the vessel, a twelve-oared boat came alongside, and the Prince, wrapt in tarpaulin like a bale of goods, was slung over the side, and the gunboat steamed out again as fast as she had entered, taking her rapid way through the Straits, and hugging the coast of Spain, with the doomed Paulovna on board.

When Oistravieff recovered consciousness, he found himself in an evident prison-cell ; with a gas lamp burning high in the stone wall, and a coarse loaf and a jug of water placed for his sustenance ; on the rough wooden table, which was clamped firmly into the floor, was a suit of coarse canvas, such as convicts wear : Oistravieff, shivering with cold, put them on. He was also glad of the hard black bread—he, for whom the choicest delicacies of life had hitherto been provided, and who had been known to have his cook knouted for spoiling an omelette. And then he tried to sleep on the hard boards ; so far succeeding that he fell into a chaos of weak dreams, each more hideous, or more tantalizing than the last. Now he was suffering the knout from stalwart Brakinska, Paulovna pitilessly looking on : now he was dining sumptuously with Paulovna, and the dishes had exquisite flavours, and the champagne was cool in its basket, and music came from gardens outside the room. The terror and the delight of his past life mingled strangely in dreams unrememberable ; dreams chiefly without meaning, which left the brain in a whirl.

“ I shall go mad,” cried Oistravieff, when he awoke.

A gaoler renewed his bread and water, and he was thankful for it. Presently the door opened, and a Russian officer, in plain clothes, stood before him, while two French soldiers kept guard outside.

"You are Prince Oistravieff?" said the new-comer.

"I am."

"You have lately married a serf, in contravention of the laws of the Empire?"

"I was forced into it. Besides, I knew the marriage would be void."

"You have degraded your name by an act of cowardice. Moreover, did you not well know that the woman was a conspirator?"

"I did not know it. I thought her an Englishwoman of loose character."

"And you married such a woman to save your life! That is not the conduct of a Russian Prince."

Oistravieff made no reply. After a pause of a few minutes the officer resumed:

"You are to return to Russia, by command of his Imperial Majesty. You will have an escort of two persons, one of whom will be with you always. You are forbidden to speak on the journey. Do you obey?"

"I obey."

A few hours later, the Prince, dressed in a travelling costume of ordinary character, was seated in a second-class railway carriage, between two Russians. They took no notice of his existence, but talked pleasantly to each other, and refreshed themselves merrily on the way, leaving him to silent thought, and purchasing for him only food enough to keep him from starvation. It was a long, long journey of many days, with the fewest possible stoppages for rest: the Prince's two guardians kept themselves up to the mark with abundant brandy, and seemed rather to enjoy their task. Travellers on many railways marked this strange trio, wondering who, or what they might be; but they went on determinately, taking any obtainable vehicles when railways failed them, and in due time brought their prisoner, in a state of misery and collapse, to the famous city of St. Petersburg.

Here the Prince found a room allotted him, not altogether devoid of comfort, in one of the prisons. Its sole light was from the roof; there was nothing for the eye to rest upon, except the whitewashed wall; there was no sound from without, nor any relief from the intolerable silence except the occasional clang of a prison bell, or the step of the warder pacing the stone gallery outside.

Some men have mind-power to defy the horror of prison, the loss of freedom and society. Who does not envy the gay and gallant spirit of the soldier-poet who sang?—

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage:
Minds innocent and quiet take
This for a hermitage."

There have been those who could find solace from the society of a

spider, or a mouse ; while others, strengthening themselves against adverse destiny, have lived in the world of science or of poetry, rewarding with golden gifts the fools who imprisoned them. But this small-brained princely barbarian, had neither sympathy nor power. Haughty and insolent when prosperous, the first blow struck him to the ground. So in this confinement, the Prince fell into an absolute lethargy, from which, however, he was in time aroused. For one day an officer of the prison entered, bearing a goodly amount of foolscap paper, together with pens and ink, and placed them on the table, saying,—

“Prince Oistravieff, it is the pleasure of his Imperial Majesty that you write at length the history of your life, from the time of your succeeding your father to the present moment. You are to begin at once, and what you have written will be removed each evening ; tell the whole truth on all points, as his Imperial Majesty has means of ascertaining it, and will severely punish any falsehood.”

Russians are usually fluent writers and speakers, and invariably have good memories ; so that the task set to Oistravieff was not so difficult as it would have been to an Englishman, who only remembers what he deems important. Oistravieff set to work with energy, finding the occupation a great relief, and described in glowing colours for the Emperor's satisfaction his demesnes, and the happiness of the serfs upon them, and the delight he had felt in carrying out the Imperial Will. He knew that before he left Russia, he had been rather a favourite with his Majesty ; the reason being that he was tall and well-built, and rode well, and looked as if he would make a good soldier. It did not occur to him that the Czar was not the man to tolerate a voluptuary and a coward. He rejoiced in the thought that this order to write an account of his life, was a mark of favour, and that freedom might follow. He made the best of himself : but he dared tell no lie.

The Czar, who was fond of psychic experiment, had these papers read to him by a secretary as an evening amusement. When he came to the incident of Paulovna's disgrace, and the brutal ill-treatment of her brother and her lover, he sprang from his sofa, fiercely, and said,—

“Scoundrel ! No wonder we are abused by the English for our serfs. Well, I will wait a little : let him go on.”

So the poor Prince, little guessing the effect produced by his memoir on his august Master, went on with his wretched story. He described his English adventures in detail. He described his entanglement with Lily Page ; the visit to the Red House ; the threats under which he had married Paulovna ; the unlucky ending of his honeymoon. He wound up with a superb flourish as to his devotion to his Imperial Majesty, his ability to communicate valuable information concerning most of the countries of Europe, especially as to England, and what he had

heard on high authority in London, as to her weakness in the East, his profound desire to prostrate himself at the feet of his Imperial Master.

"Faugh!" said the Czar, "the fellow is an abomination: such men disgrace us before Europe with their cowardly cruelty. Bring me a decree to sign at once; he shall go to Siberia for life."

Such was the end of Oistravieff's memoir—and of Oistravieff himself. It has been asserted that these events greatly tended to accelerate the Emancipation of the Serfs.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BRAKINSKA ATTEMPTS REVENGE.

<i>Astrologos.</i>	Nay, good my lord, act warily:
The mad churl's pistol may upset a dynasty.	
<i>Raphael.</i>	Well, let the dynasty go. Come, cast my horoscope,
And you will find that I was born when Jupiter	
Just dimmed fair Venus' lovely light at eventide—	
Only just dimmed it.	<i>The Comedy of Dreams.</i>

DEMETRIUS BRAKINSKA sped straight to London. All fear of consequences left him when he thought of his poor sweetheart's fate. The natural brave temper of the man, always warped and concealed by conspiracy, came back again. He remembered the happy time years ago when he and Paulovna were betrothed; the rustic songs and dances; the joyous fancies of quiet days to come. He remembered how when the Prince came down and praised Paulovna's beauty, there seemed to hover a shadow over the future, though he was yet unsuspecting of harm. And then the hideous crime . . . the pale shuddering Paulovna's silent misery . . . the brute punishment inflicted on him and Ivan because they dared interfere! The whole bit into his brain like acid into metal as the train took him towards London.

And what a fool he had been to join the conspiracy! But for his oath he might—and *would*—have killed Oistravieff the first time he saw him in London. Oaths should be thrown to the winds now. If Oistravieff was beyond his reach, at the bottom of the sea, there was ANOTHER . . . whom he knew by instinct to be Paulovna's murderer.

It was Paulovna's influence that had made him a conspirator. So much had he loved that girl that he aided her in her scheme to marry the Prince. He would not disobey her for the world. And now he thought of her . . . dead; cruelly tortured; her beautiful young life cut short by the orders of a cold-blooded, weak-brained, chicken-hearted tyrant. He would have his revenge, if it could be had. He felt in his coat-pocket for the loaded six-chambered revolver which

was his customary companion. It consoled him to think how soon it would do service.

As he approached London he discussed within himself whether he should try to find Ivan. He decided not—for three reasons. He did not know where to look for Ivan; he did not wish Ivan to risk his life with him; and he feared being recognized and hindered in London. So he went straight on to Dover, eating nothing, for a crumb would have choked him, but drinking at intervals great gulps of raw brandy.

The passage to Calais in the most miserable of all packet-boats was a long and stormy one. Demetrius took no note of it, but sat on deck, holding on by one hand while the other clutched the pistol in his pocket, and longing for Paris. Paris came at last: Brakinska had a passport perfectly *en règle*, for this was one of the customs of his wandering fraternity—and he walked unsuspected into the city, resolved to lose no time in what he had to do.

It was afternoon, brandy, which will keep a man moving for a long time, will not indefinitely postpone the pangs of hunger—those pangs Demetrius began to feel, and went into the first unpretending café he saw, and ordered something . . . he hardly knew what. A man who sat at a table opposite, marked him for some time eating ravenously, and then rose and hurried out, saying a word to the keeper of the café as he passed. By curious ill-luck, Demetrius had entered a café much frequented by *mouchards*, and was recognized at once. He was happily ignorant of this. He finished his meal rapidly, glancing through a journal, while he ate: an announcement in that journal determined his movements. He called for the *addition*, and was surprised at the pertinacity with which the waiter pressed him to take something more. Unpersuadable he went away, clutching his bosom-friend: and the café-keeper, as he passed through the door, whispered—

“See where he goes, Jules.”

Not easy for the feeble little French waiter to keep that stalwart Russian in view. He was soon at fault. Demetrius dived into by-streets as soon as he could, aware that for him to be recognized was only too likely, and that recognition would spoil his revenge. He lurked in out of the way corners, choosing, when the gas was lighted, the darkest and gloomiest he could find, clutching his pistol, thinking of Paulovna, thinking of Number One.

But as the bells of numerous churches struck eight together, he stood with a mighty crowd in front of a stately theatre, its front ablaze with light, its carpeted vestibule full of lovely exotic flowers. It was the first representation of a tragedy whose theme was patriotism, heroism, liberty. The author was a poet, as poets go, in France: there seem to be none now like the Duc d'Orleans, Rousard Reney de Belleau on the one hand . . . like Olivier Basseliu or

François Villou on the other. The play had been heralded by much trumpeting : Nebuchadnezzar could hardly have surpassed it with that wonderful concert in honour of the Golden Image. All the world was to be there, from the Emperor to the *gamin* . . . only the *gamin* would have an outside place. Of course Number One would be there.

A fluctuating excited crowd. Much soldiery, horse and foot. The glory of France, that imperishable entity in the material form of floating plumes, flashing steel, uniforms most magnificent. A train of carriages floating down the lighted street, every one of which contains either a lady or a general, ready for conquests. A crowd of *bourgeoises mouchards*, *gamins*, what not ? Demetrius Brakinska in the midst of them. *Vive l'Empereur !*

What did he see of that brilliant pageant, since swept away as if it were a dream ? Nothing. He looked only for one face, as he stood impassive by the portico, his right hand in his breast-pocket, ready on the instant, Demetrius Brakinska knew his own keenness of sight and quickness of touch. He feared not missing his quarry. He knew he should suffer death for it, but it did not trouble him. One thought lit up the chambers of his brain like fire, and nerved his strong right hand to iron steadiness . . . his poor dead Paulovna.

What would the Parisian crowd that clustered around him have thought if they had known the fatal intent of this tall Russian wrapt in his heavy coat ? Ah, Demetrius, may no one have guessed it in this city of spies ? It is no trivial affair to fight Number One.

His carriage comes. I suppose Demetrius knows it by instinct, for he clutches more closely the butt of his pistol, and his finger is on the trigger. The door opens. There descends a short flabby man, who looks as if all his life he had been through the Bankruptcy Court, and paying the very smallest dividends.

As he descends the steps, Brakinska's pistol marks him down . . . the shot rings through the street. There is a shriek. There is a yell. There is a second shot.

Ah, but Brakinska had been watched. As he fired, a man at his right struck his arm up, and the shot passed just above the illustrious head, shattering the carriage door.

As he fired a man at his left clapped a pistol to his ear, and down fell Demetrius Brakinska, dead on the spot.

The poor fellow's lurking in corners had foiled the *mouchards* ; but they waited for him at the theatre door . . . and so he lost his revenge.

The news travelled all over Europe ; travelled fast enough from land to land ; reached Delamere as the Earl and Carington were having a chat over the prospects of Europe.

"There was nothing to identify the man, according to the papers," says Carington. "But it was poor Brakinska, I'll swear. Their shooting him down at once, which is ascribed 'to excess of zeal on the

part of an officer, who has been reprimanded,' is a proof, if Demetrius had been publicly examined there would have been a surprise for Europe."

"How long is this to last?" said the Earl. "It is a great scandal."

"But inevitable. We want a good fierce war. Poor Demetrius! he was a brave fellow."

"A hero," said the Earl. "He shall have a cenotaph of marble in this hall."

"I must go and frighten Rachette and the Marchesa," said Mr. Carington.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

L'HOMME PROPOSE.

Astrologos. You say that you're in love, you little reprobate?

Alouette. In love! Of course. What do men bring up daughters for, Except to love; the cat must have its mice you know, And when a kitten, watches at the wainscoting; The unfledged bird, whose wings are rudimentary, (A favourite word of yours, papa!) desires to fly . . .

Astrologos. And often topples from the nest and breaks its neck.

The Comedy of Dreams.

MR. CARINGTON did not allow the Marchesa to rush down to Carlisle in search of her Leo: indeed the story he had to tell her of Demetrius Brakinska completely frightened her out of any such notion. He knew well that if Frank Noel's comrade were the man at whom he guessed, any attempt to seek him would end in his flying off at a tangent, like a comet that is caught in a planet's atmosphere. He had heard of too many reappearances to be surprised if this man should turn out to be Rollo; but, being of that wise temper of Lord Melbourne's, which induces a man to "let things alone" when he cannot quite see the wisest course, he resolved to follow that principle on the present occasion. Besides, he had matters nearer at hand to attend to. He saw clearly what lode-star drew Frank Noel so straight northward; he knew the meaning of that visionary look in Elinor's eyes; he meant in this case also to "leave things alone," and see what happened.

It was a merry March morning. "If a peck of March dust is worth a king's ransom," all the kings of the earth since kings were invented might have been bought with the clouds of dust raised by the strong east wind that day. It was a frolic waltzing wind, that went in for whirls and eddies, catching ponderous old ladies at street corners of Carlisle, and raising them a foot or so from the ground, and then dropping them quietly on their feet. Luckily there was a brilliant

sun, which softened the keenness of the wind : to man or woman in perfect health it was a perfect day. Elinor, full of health, full of hope, full of love, rose early and went out through the gardens, and wandered on the fell, whose virgin turf was softer than any carpet. Raffaella had teased her the night before.

"Did he think I had dressed his pretty doll nicely?" she asked. "Was he pleased, do you think? He looked very happy—what a charming boy he is! I could find it in my heart to run away with him, if it would not break yours."

Elinor had no wit to reply : folk in love are never witty : it is indeed no laughing matter. Happily the Marchesa was dreadfully sleepy after excitement and champagne : so Elinor managed to send her to bed, and nothing was seen of her till long after noon next day, when Mr. Carington came to tell her of Brakinska's fate. At this terrible news her courage of the night before departed at once : she had no more to say about seeking Leo at Carlisle, but settled down to her chocolate and brioches (how well Rachette served both!) under the guardianship of Tasse.

Elinor was on the fell, romping with the merry March wind, which kissed her and pulled her about audaciously, dishevelled her hair, and rumpling her petticoats, and making her look twenty times lovelier than the Marchesa had. Who can fathom the thoughts of a girl who holds in her hand love's priceless pearl ; who feels it there, though she has not heard from her lover's lips the loving word? She cannotathom herself, O no ! nor understand the ruddy glow that lies on the rocks in Eden's stream, and makes the dark tarn look like a dream of old romance. Ay, me ! who is it that has paid this beautiful child a visit? Who casts this golden glamour over the ancient fells for this pretty rover? The world is changed ; the hall might be a fairy palace by some far sea ; the tarn might be Sir Lancelot's mere. Yet is there ringing in her ear a soft clear voice that seems to say : "The world will be changed still more to-day."

She did not guess that Frank Noel could see her as she ascended the hillside : but all the pleasantest bedrooms looked towards the fell, and among these was Frank's. He, lazy fellow, had awoke a full hour later than his lady-love, and had not begun to dress when he caught a glimpse of her lithe figure on the hillside. Nobody could mistake her : certainly, not Frank. He dressed rapidly ; rang for refreshment (our material sex must have their seltzer and brandy even when in love) ; was disgusted when the servant brought him a letter therewith.

"From Pinniger," he said to himself. "I'll open it as I go up the fell. Now's the time to catch my beautiful bird. We can never be more perfectly alone than on the fell in the solitary morning."

He carelessly shoved the letter into his pocket, and tramped away up the steep hill-side as if he had been all his life a mountaineer.

True the downs of Wilts are not a bad introduction to the fells of Strathclyde. If in your boyhood you have played hockey and football against a Wiltshire hill, you need not fear Skiddaw . . . or even Mont Blanc.

There is a lovely mysterious little tarn under a granite block at the summit of Langton Fell. It is roughly circular; about ten feet in diameter; always stands at the same height. Once a year, at midnight on the Eve of Saint John, its water is said to rise into a column, like a waterspout seen at sea: and whoever ventures to see this sight may, when it subsides, read the manner of his death in the mirror of the tarn. It is not related that many adventurers have tried the experiment. On this merry March morn Langton Tarn looked as little as you can conceive like a mirror of death: for beneath the huge boulders of granite fifty feet high, which must have been flung there in some tremendous throes of Earth, myriads of myriads of years ago, sat . . . trying to regain her breath and to braid her hair . . . the loveliest girl in the world, witness Frank Noel. She looked up and saw him; *hinnuleo similis*, she sprang to her feet:

"How you startled me, Mr. Noel!" she said. "How early you are!"

"Some one I know is earlier."

They sat silent awhile, looking . . . not at each other . . . but at the picturesque turrets of Delamere Hall, their gilt vanes fretted by the wild wind and lighted by the sun.

Suddenly Frank Noel said:

"Elinor, do you know what brought me from Salisbury here?"

"Yes," she said, looking merrily at him.

"Will you say *yes* to my next question?"

"How can I tell, sir? Perhaps it will be . . . *Do you hate me?*"

"Elinor, my darling," said Frank, rising from his seat by her side, and looking down upon her, "I am a slow fellow, I have been slow all my life. But if I am slow I am steadfast, and what I once say is always true. I love you, and shall never love any one else. Can you love me?"

"If you would let me get up, I would kiss you, you dear old Frank. Yes, I *do* love you: I think I loved you the minute I saw you . . . and up to that minute I had thought it impossible I could ever meet anybody I could love. I used to wish I could meet somebody like what Mr. Carington must have been in his youth. O Frank, I *do* love you."

She was in his arms now, in his loyal and loving embrace, and he sat on the granite ledge with her fair head on his shoulder, smoothing her wind-tossed hair. They were very happy under the great rock, cosily sheltered from the east wind, with the windy vanes of the great house of the Delameres glittering in the sun. Very happy were

they, though they uttered no words ; though the time passed unconsciously, and the world beyond appeared an empty dream. Then Elinor knew the meaning of that change which some strange voice had whispered in her ear.

Such trances must have an end. Their trance was broken by the clangour of the breakfast-bell at Delamere, which always rang at ten to the instant, even if there were no one to breakfast.

"Frack," said Elinor, springing up, and gaily kissing his brow, "you must talk to Mr. Carington. He knows who I am : I don't. All I know is, I haven't got any money, which seems necessary to existence in these days."

"Pooh !" says Frank, "I've got a trifle, about five hundred a year : and can't I work ? you should see me. I thought of turning farmer, Elinor."

"How delightful ! I was brought up at a farm. I can milk cows like an angel, and am remarkably clever in pigs."

"Hurrah ! we shall be as jolly as possible. I'll talk to Carington as soon as I can find him. He knows everybody and everything. By the way, Elinor, I didn't see that little Lucy last night : what's become of her ?"

"That little Lucy ! Now, Frank, if you're a general lover I've nothing to do with you. I know nothing about that little Lucy. She was only a servant, I believe : not having seen her for a day or two, I supposed she had been sent away."

"Ah, likely enough," said Frank, though he was not altogether satisfied that Lucy was a servant merely. But on his slow perception dawned the idea that it was as well not to let his lady-love imagine he cared to remember the name of any other woman. The man of the world knows better. Flirting with the Belle of the season at Lady Mactartan's, he says . . .

"Do you know that scraggy girl with yellow hair . . . can't remember her name . . . had to take her down to supper last night at the Omillions . . . dreadful people, those Omillions : Stockbrokers I think they call them . . . but they give good suppers. Do you know the girl ?"

Of course it is the Rival Belle . . . second favourite.

"Oh," she says, sweetly, "don't you think her pretty ? A slender form, you know, and hair true auburn. Really, Mr. Fitzflatter."

"Well, really, Miss Velvetine, *that is not my style.*"

And an emphatic look accompanied the emphatic words. But what had he said to the Rival Belle at the Omillions' ?

Suddenly Frank Noel remembered Pinniger's letter, took it from his pocket, and broke the seal. He had a habit of looking at the end of a letter first : what he read herein so astonished him that he said,

"Do read this letter, Elinor, I can't make it out."

Thus it ran :

"DEAR NOEL,

"You remember, when I was telling you that I was about to change my offices, I asked you whether I should continue to take charge of the portrait of your ancestor, that worthy of Sarum, Matthew Noel, and of the cabinet, which was also made an heirloom. You wished me to do so.

"In the removal, an unlucky accident took place. The cabinet was dropped, through the men's awkwardness, and being very old, was completely dislocated. When placed in the room assigned for it the back was quite loose, and on examining it, I perceived that some secret drawer or compartment had been forced open by the shock. This compartment contained a small ebony casket: its key was tied to its handle.

"Opening it (for I knew you could trust me, and thought it as well to solve the mystery) I found two packets. On one was written, in old Matthew Noel's hand, *To be opened by my Heir*. This I have placed among your other documents till I hear from you.

"What do you think was the other packet, Master Frank? It was without address, so I examined it. Very yellow was the paper, and very thin: there were twenty sheets . . . and each sheet was a Bank of England note for a thousand pounds! Won't the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street be astonished when those forgotten notes have to be turned into gold? Won't my friend Frank Noel set up his farm immediately?

"Yours always,

"PINNIGER."

He was Town Clerk . . . and Town Clerks sign like Peers.

Frank and Elinor looked at each other in amazement as this letter was read.

"I don't know much about money," she said, "but twenty thousand pounds seem a great deal."

"About a month's income for Lord Delamere," he replied. "It seems incredible, but I can believe it: the old boy was uncommonly careful, and Pinniger never makes mistakes."

"Then you will be able to have your farm, Frank, as soon as you like."

"That twenty thousand pounds is yours, love. This is our real wedding day, and it comes as a wedding gift. We will buy a farm with it, if you like, and it shall be your farm, and I will be your head man."

"O, Frank!"

"Yes, Elinor, this is your fortune. Old Matthew Noel evidently meant it for you, or it would not have come on your wedding day. But now I *must* go and talk to Carington."

She tripped up to her room: luckily the Great Hall had so many

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ways of egress and ingress that people seldom met on the stairs. She ran up to her room, this loving Elinor, and threw herself on her knees, by her bedside, in a passion of happy tears, and thanked God for Frank Noel.

Frank, meanwhile, had found Mr. Carington, and requested a few minutes' conversation. They sat in Mr. Carington's room; and he was rather surprised when Frank, instead of broaching the expected topic, handed him Pinniger's letter. This he read carefully: then he said,—

"It is all quite right, evidently. And so you have set your heart upon being a farmer. As Pinniger says, this will just do the thing comfortably."

"I have other designs for the money, sir. I have already given it to my future wife."

"Indeed," says Mr. Carington; "pray, who is the lady?"

"Elinor," says Frank.

"Miss Elinor Nameless, eh, my boy? I have foreseen this complication. I saw it must come to this. Take heart, and I will pull you through it."

"What do you mean, Mr. Carington?" asked Frank, half frightened. "What is there to fear?"

"Your own pride, Frank. Come, can you listen quietly to a long story? I have nothing to do for an hour or so. We will have a glass of wine and a biscuit, and you shall listen to what it is important you should know."

Frank acquiesced. Tokay and Presburg biscuits were placed on the table. Mr. Carington began his narrative.

"The Earl of Delamere married, about forty years ago, a Miss Mary Powell, a pretty Welsh girl, of no birth. The marriage was kept quiet, as his father was then alive. She gave him a son. But, soon after he married her, he discovered that she was at intervals completely imbecile, and had been so from her birth. Her crafty parents had carefully prevented her from seeing him during courtship, except in her lucid intervals. He was disgusted. He took his son away from her and had him brought up elsewhere. He sent her home to her parents with a sufficient allowance, insisting on secrecy as to the marriage. She died soon after; but Delamere paid them for secrecy to the end of their lives, whence it is generally supposed that he has never married, and his death will cause great excitement among heirs-at-law and next of kin. The evidence of the marriage has, however, been carefully verified, and is placed in the record chamber here at Delamere.

"The boy was christened Rollo, an old name of the house. When he was old enough, his father sent him off to a middle-class school at Rothwell, in Northamptonshire, kept by a fellow called Maddox. Delamere was then living a wild life in town: you know too well one

terrible incident of his career which he can never forget. Neither he nor your father, Frank, were good fellows in those days: I watched them both: I prophesied the quarrel. But they were true friends, for all that: and, I think, if Lovelace Noel had lived he might have become worthy of his son."

"Thank you, sir," said Frank, simply.

"I left Rollo at Maddox's: he went there when about twelve. The warp in his mother's mind showed itself in his case in a wilder form: there were times when he seemed absolutely mad. While he was a mere child, the schoolmaster, who had the true antique notions on the subject of flogging, could keep him in reasonable order: but he grew into a regular young giant, and Maddox began to be afraid of him. Delamere paid the man as much as he got by the rest of his school, some fifty boys, together: so he kept him on, being most unwilling to lose so liberal an allowance. The history of Rollo's school life must remain unwritten: I have only such information about it as Maddox himself one day gave me, when he came whining to my rooms in Jermyn Street to ask if Mr. Delamere would give him compensation: as his school was ruined. I could only get rid of him by a five-pound note.

"Rollo robbed orchards: so do all schoolboys. He broke bounds; he was out of nights; he committed other venial offences. Maddox could have pardoned this. But Maddox had a pretty sister-in-law, Mary Applegate; and he deemed it entirely wrong that Rollo should be seen leaving that young person's chamber when the bell rang in the morning. Rollo, moreover, having method in his madness, organized a conspiracy among the bigger boys, his chief ally being one Bullivant, a huge fellow, dull, but ready to fight under orders. Through this conspiracy came the climax, which caused Maddox to come to town, and request Rollo's removal. He had done something so wicked, that Maddox plucked up courage, and ordained that he should be flogged. Rollo gave the word to his fellow-conspirators, and they flogged the schoolmaster instead.

"This, of course, ended his Rothwell experience. He was in his nineteenth year, a noble young fellow, but not broken in. The moment I saw him, I knew I could break him in if I had time. Unluckily I had not much time just then: I was living a pleasant London life with a dozen dinner cards a day, and nothing else to do. Rollo had been told that Delamere was his father, and he had always used his surname. But he supposed that he was only his natural son. For some time he lived in my rooms, and I tried to tame him: I could have tamed him thoroughly if only there had been the chance. He cared for no one but me: he would not see his father. I thought his father treated him unfairly in allowing him to suppose himself illegitimate: and I determined to tell him of his father's marriage.

One day when he was in his usual mad mood, and I was trying to quiet him, he said,—

“‘Look here, Carington, it’s no good, what do I care what becomes of me? I am one of those unfortunate creatures who come into the world when they are not wanted, and are looked upon as a disgrace to everybody, and are dragged up anyhow. Who cares for me? If I die to-morrow it will be considered a good riddance. No; I won’t see my father.’

“‘But suppose you are legitimate?’ I said.

“‘No; that cannot be, I should not have been such an outcast.’

“I then told him the truth. He was silent for a minute, and then swore fiercely that he would neither see his father again, nor go into society. After that I think he was madder than ever.

“In the autumn, when he was in his twentieth year, I told him I was going off on one of my riding tours: would he come with me? He was delighted at the notion. We were well mounted, and made our way into the very centre of England. My idea was to explore Shakspeare’s country, but we got no farther than Warwick. There Rollo happened to have a school friend, the redoubtable Bullivant, already mentioned, who helped him to thrash the schoolmaster. Bullivant was an obvious fool: but it is often observable in families that, where the boys are fools the girls are clever.

“Theresa Bullivant was a marvellously clever girl, and very beautiful. Although I was nearly forty years old, and ought to have known better, I fell desperately in love with her. It is the only time in my life since I was a boy that I have been foolish enough to fall in love. Whether Theresa would have made a good wife I cannot now say. Certainly the connection was not a desirable one; but I was too much in love to consider that at the time. We stayed in the neighbourhood some time that I might see as much of her as possible; and through Rollo’s acquaintance with young Bullivant, we had many invitations to the house. I told Rollo how much I admired Theresa, and I fancied that he liked another of the sisters. One morning when Rollo had been away for a couple of days (he was often away, and I was never astonished at anything he did) he came in to me in an excited way and said:

“‘Look here, Carington, I’ve married Theresa Bullivant; I don’t know what made me do it,—I felt so mad. I think it was because you wanted her. I can’t help it. Make the governor look after her, for I’m off.’

“I have never seen him since. Two years later there came intelligence of the foundering of the ship *Vespasian*, late at night, off Grisez, all hands lost . . . among them Rollo Delamere. This information was confirmed, after the fullest possible inquiry. Hence there is every reason to believe he is dead.

“I am getting near the end of this long story, Frank. Theresa

gave birth to a daughter. Rollo had not told the Bullivants his real position, so poor Theresa, who lived only two years after the birth of her child, did not know that she had any claim upon Delamere. I wrote to Delamere on the subject, and he offered to pay, through me, an annuity to Theresa. I saw that the Bullivants were incapable of bringing up the child after poor Theresa died, so I begged to be allowed to take her from them altogether. I put her in the care of an ancient relation who I knew would bring her up properly. When Delamere succeeded to the earldom I pressed upon him the importance of acknowledging his own marriage and his son's. But he would not do so. This is my business here now: and I have at length brought it to a successful ending. You will not be surprised to hear that Rollo's child is your Elinor . . . *yours*, I say, for I see you are both in earnest."

Frank was staggered.

"Tell me, Mr. Carington, what I am to do? How can I marry her, being so much above me in wealth and rank? If the Earl consented, it would be only because he wants to make amends for having killed my father. What am I to do?"

"Frank," said Mr. Carington, "I quite expected this. You are proud, rightly proud: you belong to as good a family as there is in England. Still, look at the matter the other way, my dear boy. Hadn't you pleasure in thinking that Elinor was a pretty little pauper?—that the twenty thousand that turned up just at the nick of time was a nice present for her? Now, don't you think it will give your Elinor infinite pleasure to do for you what you thought of doing for her? Why should she not? There is selfishness in the independence which refuses to receive anything from the woman who loves you."

"All you say is right, my dear Mr. Carington, and I will take your advice above that of any man . . . I will accept your opinion rather than my own. Tell me what shall I do?"

"Go to your Elinor: tell her all I have told you: talk it over from end to end. She has not the slightest idea that she will probably be Countess of Delamere in her own right . . . for the Earldom goes in the female line. Tell her the whole story."

"But," said Frank, "my position is doubly awkward. Elinor and I loved one another before we had the least idea there was this impassable gulf between us."

"*Impassable!*"

"Is it not?"

"Assuredly not. Now I am a mere man of the world, as you know, Frank. There is no poetry in *my* soul. I go in for comfort and quiet, moderate habits and early hours. Yet even to my commonplace intellect it seems that in this imbroglia there is one paramount consideration. Take the three words, *money*,

rank, love: how would you range them? Which do you place first?"

"Love, of course," said Frank, unhesitatingly.

"Love, of course. Rank, a bad second. Money, third; loving second place by a neck. Well, here are you and Elinor in love. Two courses are open to you. First, this: be unselfish, and don't marry. What results? You run wild, and spend that twenty thousand of old Matt Noel's in a year; Elinor pines, is shut up for a year or two in the Great Hall—is then shut up for ever in the family vault . . . the last Countess of Delamere. The carrion crows of Chancery gorge the great Delamere estates.

"Come, Frank, don't be foolish. Go and talk it over with Elinor. Her healthy mind will soon set you right. Ask her how she likes the idea of

'Mr. Noel and the Countess of Delamere.'"

Frank went.

"I should like to deprive the boy of his grievance," thought Mr. Carington. "But it can't be Rollo."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DIEU DISPOSE.

Astrologos. I have known men who died, and came to life again;
I have known men who died, and came to death again.
I have known men who neither lived nor died at all,
But were pure phantoms, shadows on the atmosphere.

Raphael. Poor ghosts, who shivered through the world.

The Comedy of Dreams.

God has his way. Milton humorously makes the rebel angels, much bored during the absence of their Prince on the first geographical exploration known to history, occupy their time in high reasonings

"Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute."

That they "found no end, in wandering mazes lost," is no matter for wonder, seeing they had just thrown away the clue. The question has disturbed men, as well as rebellious spirits, from time immemorial to time instant: the solution is intelligible only to those who understand that they are one with the Divinity. My will is free, because God's will is free: He and I can no more differ in opinion than my brain and my hand can differ. No man understands himself who can think of himself apart from God. A certain poet has written—

"Helen and I look out upon the west.
O unimaginable sunset! O
Soft sky in mystic waves of colours drest,
With great Apollo's final kiss aglow!
O lights that lessen, linger, glisten, grow!
Almighty Artist, never do I see
Thy little lightest touch of fire or snow,
Of bird that sings, of blossom upon tree,
Without that inner silent saying: *I love Thee.*"

Were this, instead of a story, a philosophic treatise, it would be easy to show that fixed fate and free will are ultimately identical; but in order to do this it would be necessary to postulate the existence of a Deity, which seems too much for ninety-nine of a hundred modern philosophers. Yet even Voltaire said that if there were no God, it would be necessary to invent one.

Frank Noel, taking Mr. Carington's advice, went in search of Elinor. She was with the Marchesa. Impatient to talk to her, he went to Raffaella's apartment: that lively lady, who had by this time forgotten her fright about Brakinska, set Tasso at him by way of welcome. The little white dog barked and snarled; the little white lady laughed and sang; Frank only looked rueful, and Elinor, who saw he wanted to talk to her, looked almost as bad. The Marchesa was delighted.

"You two children are both in love," she said, "and not with one another. Nothing else could make you so dull. If it was *one another*, you would be making love before my eyes, and treating me as if I were nobody. You see. I know the signs."

Poor dear Frank, weighed with Mr. Carington's revelation, had not a word to throw at a dog—much less at this fantastic Florentine; and as to Elinor, she saw so clearly that her lover was troubled about something, that she hardly listened to what her friend said. Probably the Marchesa had some idea of the situation, for she suddenly exclaimed,—

"Oh! go away, please, both of you! You are making me so dull that I shall begin to think I am English, not Italy. Now do go, that's dear young people: Tasso and I can amuse one another."

Thus adjured, Frank and Elinor took their leave, and went together into the Hall, which was deserted.

"Elinor, my love," said Frank, standing with his back to the fire and looking moodily into space, "I am most unhappy."

"Why, Frank?"

"It seems ludicrous," he went on, without answering her question; "you and I love one another, I think?"

"I should think we did," she exclaimed, indignantly.

"Well, the right thing to do is to marry; but how are we to do that when Carington tells me that you are Lord Delamere's granddaughter, and heiress to the title and estates?"

"Is that true?" asked Elinor, gravely.

"Carington says so—what he says is true."

She laughed quite merrily.

"Now do they think, Frank, and do you think; that there is any claim upon me to behave as the heiress of the Delameres might be expected to? If they had brought me up to it from the nursery, I might have considered myself made of pure aristocratic gold, and not deigned to look at anybody carved in baser metal. It is too late now; and glad I am it is too late. You and I don't want the estate, Frank: couldn't they find a male heir somewhere? I like this glorious old house, and I like my grandfather; but I love *you*, Frank, and I won't let you off. I know exactly what it is. Proud boy! you don't want your wife to have more 'rascal counters' than yourself. Did I object, sir, to that casual twenty thousand pounds? I am ashamed of you men. What are money and rank against love?"

"That's what Carington said."

"Of course he did. Mr. Carington is a man of the right sort. You, being his godson, ought to be like him. What in the world is it between you and me, whether I am a countess or a village maiden? What you have heard has not changed *me*; why should it change you? I am Elinor; I was Elinor this morning when you said you loved me—when I had no estates, no title, no surname even. I don't want estates or title or surname; I want your love."

"You have it, darling Elinor," said Frank; "but you don't see the difficulties of my position. The world will say I married you, not for yourself, but for position, money, and the like."

"And why should not the world say so, you foolish Frank? If you had married me without a farthing, the world would have laughed at your silliness; now it will envy your cleverness. Is either of the two worth consideration?"

"You only say what I quite believe, my own love; but I cannot help shrinking from the thought that people will fancy I had sordid reasons for marrying you."

"O dear me, what a fuss about nothing!" cries Elinor. "I'll advertise in the *Times* that you asked me to marry you before you had the least idea of who I was. Will that do?"

Frank could not help laughing at her energy. Quite agreeing with her, his natural pride came in the way of his acting on what he knew to be the right principle. Besides, there was another consideration, which, after some hesitation, he communicated to her.

"Elinor," he said, "another thing is that I fear Lord Delamere won't object."

"Well, Frank, that is an odd thing to fear. What can you mean?"

"Simply this. Lord Delamere thinks he is bound to do all he

can for me, because he was unfortunate enough to kill my father in a duel."

"Your father, Frank?"

"Yes, the very day I was born. They were great friends, but quarrelled and fought about some trifle. Mr. Carington was there. That is what makes the Earl ask me here. Now if he would refuse me right out, I should say, 'Go to the devil! Elinor is mine, and I mean to have her.' But if he makes no objection in the world, I shall feel that he is giving you to me just because he happened to shoot my father."

"My dear cantankerous cross-grained Frank! I can so easily settle all that. I have only to ask the Earl to say that nothing shall induce him to sanction our marriage. He'll do it directly. He is just the sort of grandfather I like: I am so glad you have introduced him to me in that capacity."

"What a madcap you are, Elinor! Why will you not consider the matter seriously?"

"You foolish Frank," she said, putting her arm around him, "how *can* I be serious on the day that my own dear love has told me he loves me? Why it is the gayest day of my life, Frank. Do you mean to try and make me miserable on this day of all the days of my life? You shan't do it, sir."

Frank could not resist her joyous words, or the loving, laughing look of her happy eyes. He said,—

"Elinor, you shall be mistress to-day. I will forget that you may be a countess."

Just as he said this, a servitor came to say that Lord Delamere would be glad to see them. They went to his apartment at once, Elinor giving Frank a smile of gay encouragement. Of course they found Mr. Carington there: he indeed had been discussing the state of affairs with the Earl at considerable length, and it was agreed between them that this was the right time to put matters straight.

There was silence for some time after they entered. Then the Earl spoke.

"It is a difficult thing, Frank Noel and Elinor Delamere, for an old man to tell two children like you that he has acted often foolishly and sometimes wickedly. Yet, when you are as old as I, perhaps you may have left something behind that you would willingly forget. Now I hear that you love one another. Elinor is my granddaughter; Frank is the son of my dearest friend. It is vain to mourn over the irretrievable past: the best amends I can make, standing on the verge of eternity, is to try to make you happy in the future. Carington has told you our family history, Frank: you, I suppose, have told Elinor."

"No, my lord."

"Well, you can when you have no better subject of discourse

Elinor, when I die, will be the Countess Delamere, owner of this place and half a dozen others. There are good honourable stewards, so everything will be right. I have made no will: all property will pass to my granddaughter. This is not the sort of talk for two young lovers, I know; but I want you, Frank Noel, to consider that you will have important duties to perform. You will of course be the real manager of these great estates, and just now is a time when land-owners have splendid opportunities of doing good. I am too old. You and Elinor, young and energetic, happy yourselves, have a grand chance of making thousands happy."

"We will try," said Elinor.

"Remember, Frank," said the Earl with a laugh, "you will be no mere Prince Consort. Though not the Earl, you will be the Countess's master. And, if you like to worry the Prime Minister, he will give you a peerage in return for the votes you can command. I have four safe boroughs. But, if you do go in for politics, I recommend you to try the House of Commons yourself. It is a great arena for a man who can articulate and is not too clever."

"Frank knows and cares no more about politics than about Hebrew," said Mr. Carington. "Stay at home with your wife and look after your estate; that's my notion for a country gentleman, and that will suit Frank. Now, Delamere, unless you want to lengthen your lecture, suppose we dismiss these youngsters to their billing and cooing. When a young lady on the same day discovers an unknown grandfather and a future husband, which will she prefer?"

"Thanks for your persiflage, Carington," said the Earl: "it helps me to throw off past memories, the nightmares of age. I am happier to-day than I have been for many a year; for I think I have done what is right, and I hope the old house of Delamere will be worthily represented. You understand me, Carington, which is what I cannot expect from Frank and Elinor."

"I think we do," said Frank Noel.

"I am glad of it," said the Earl. "From this day the past is past—utterly. I shall think of nothing but your future."

Frank and Elinor left Lord Delamere: Mr. Carington remained awhile.

"Now that I have settled everything according to your advice, Carington,—which, mind you, I consider to have been devilish good advice,—I don't care how soon I shuffle off this mortal coil."

"Don't you? I do. I want you to live a century, Delamere, to amaze the puny weaklings of the present generation. Frank and Elinor will be fit for nothing but love-making for a year, at least; after that, I foresee that Frank will ripen into a country gentleman of the true type, and Elinor, who is a mere child as yet, into a lady worthy to be heiress of the Delameres. But if their responsibilities begin too soon, it will spoil them. So you

must be contented to remain on this earth a year or two longer, and not be in such a devil of a hurry to become an angel."

"Your advice is good," said the Earl, "though your phraseology is curious. Certainly I should make an odd angel. I have never seriously regarded myself in that respect."

When Mr. Carington left the Earl he went to see the Marchesa, well aware that she would deem herself deserted.

"O Frank," she said as he entered, "what has happened? No one comes near me. I thought we were besieged. I have been setting Tasso at imaginary enemies all day. Ah, I am so glad! he has torn your trousers. What have I done to be deserted in this way?"

"My dear Raffaioletta," said Mr. Carington, taking her hand—a little pink shell it looked, as it lay in the palm of his, long-fingered, filbert-nailed, and free of flesh—"those two young people have been making love all day. They have come to an understanding. I have been closeted with the Earl. Now that all is settled, I came to you as soon as possible; but Frank and Elinor are away love-making, and I dare say we shan't see them till dinner."

"It is very selfish of them," she said. "I declare, there they are, going up the hill—as if they could not have quite enough of each other *after* they are married."

"You must forgive the first day, Raffaella. We are all of us fools once in our lives. I assure you I had hard work to bring these young people together."

"Why, any one could see they were in love," said the Marchesa.

"O yes, they were in love; but it came out that Elinor was the Earl's granddaughter, and will inherit all his property: so Frank thought it would be wrong to marry her."

"Queer race, you English!" said Raffaella. "You weigh and count your sovereigns, and keep them in your banks and cash-boxes, and rattle them in your pockets. You worship them. Here is poor dear Frank Noel thinking it wrong to marry the little doll I dressed for him, because she will have so much a year more than himself, and be called a Countess. I could understand this anywhere else; but in England I thought a man was a man. Have I been mistaken all this time? I thought that an Earl and a gentleman—like Frank Noel—were on equal terms in England."

"They are," said Mr. Carington.

"Then what is all this trouble about? If two people love one another, are they to compare the values of their property before they come to an agreement? If one has a saucepan more than the other, is the match to be broken off? And if one saucepan, a million saucepans: the actual amount makes no difference. The difference between Elinor's property and Frank's is only an immense saucepan of gold. What can it matter, when two people marry, which happens to have most money?"

"You are a charming logician, Raffaella," said Mr. Carington, "but it is the same everywhere. We live in a time when the accumulation of money is the chief object of most men's lives. I don't care about money, myself; in fact, I seldom have any worth mentioning. I live chiefly at the houses of my friends, and my tradespeople never send in their bills. I really think I don't spend a thousand a year. But I am an economical man, whereas just now extravagance is the fashion. How much do you spend a year, Raffaella?"

"O please don't ask. More than I've got, always."

Frank and Elinor, having had their lecture, walked up to Langton Tarn to get it blown away. When they reached the memorable place—the granite ledge beneath the mighty granite boulder—they sat down and were silent. Frank had his arm round Elinor's waist, and felt that power of possession which is the male creature's delight. Suddenly he exclaimed,—

"What a nuisance money is! I wish nobody had any."

"Oh!" says Elinor, "it is very useful, now and then."

"Yes, but look at you and me. I've got enough to live upon comfortably. You will have two hundred times as much. What *can* you do with the other hundred and ninty-nine?"

"What an infant you are!" says Elinor. "My grandfather is a poorer man than you. You have about a thousand a year and no responsibilities; he has two hundred thousand, and five or six great houses to maintain, and an ancient position to uphold. He is lord-lieutenant of the county: what do you suppose that costs him? I quite dread succeeding him—it will be such a heavy weight; but you *must* help me, Frank: you *will* help me?"

"My darling," said Frank, "will I not?" He looked into her lovely changeful eyes, and then he kissed her eyelids, and then he said,—

"If I am to manage this vast estate, I will do my best to make everyone happy who works upon it. That's the first thing, eh, Elinor?"

"Of course it is."

"I would rather have had a cosy little farm of my own, with my Elinor milking the cows now and then for fun; but if I am to be husband of the richest peeress in England I suppose I must do my duty."

"My dear Frank," said Elinor, looking at him with a lovely, loving smile, "you will do what is right, I know. Don't trouble yourself about the future. Lord Delamere will live twenty years more, at least; and you will be quite tired of me in twenty years."

"*Twenty!*" says Frank. "Well, you give yourself quite a long innings."

It had been arranged, in honour of the betrothal, that the Earl should dine in the Hall this evening; and Richette's lively imagina-

tion had devised several absolute novelties. His *pouding postiche*, which looked exactly like a bombshell, was a great success. Lord Delamere could scarcely remove his eyes from Frank and Elinor all the time: he was wondering whether the new blood of the Sarum Noels would invigorate the Delamere fluid. There was not much conversation: the young folk had talked their talk by Langton Tarn, and had nothing fresh to say. So it was altogether a quiet little entertainment on this occasion. The party consisted of the Earl, Mr. Carington, Frank, the Marchesa, and Elinor—as pretty a quintette as you would be likely to see anywhere. Two such charming women, in styles so absolutely different, are seldom to be seen; and it is needless to say that, each in his own way, the Earl and Carington and Frank, were men worth looking at.

They had a pleasant evening, and the Earl was full of brilliancy and wit; but he left early, as was his wont. The others sat later. Suddenly, amid laughter caused by some fantastic utterance of the Marchesa's, Frank Noel said,—

"Surely that is the horn at the drawbridge."

"Rather late for a visitor," said Mr. Carington.

"A knight-errant," said Raffaella. "It will be charming. You are all pairing off in a commonplace way, and no one ever says a word of courtesy to me. I am neglected. I have a feeling of instinct that the man who blew that horn is my knight-errant."

"It was somebody's coachman, Raffaella, depend on it," said Mr. Carington. "Don't make any rash vows, for fear. You wouldn't like to be pledged to marry a groom."

"Who can be coming here to-night?" said Elinor.

"What can it matter to you and me?" asked Frank. "The Earl may have asked the Lord Chancellor or the Prime Minister, or some other profoundly oppressive party. There are plenty of beds in the house, and there is plenty of wine. Give them some wine, and send them to bed; that's my notion. We are not to be interrupted."

"Frank, my boy," says Mr. Carington, "you are equal to anything to-day. We all know why. Little Elinor blushes, I see. Raffaella is so nearly asleep that her opinion is not worth asking."

"Am I asleep?" cried the Marchesa, sharply. "Franky, you are a libeller. I am wider awake than I have been for a thousand years."

"This is a wakeful evening, when one is full of fun from sunset to sunrise. It is one of those electric nights when one expects something to happen. Something *will* happen, I know."

At this moment a door was thrown open in the Hall, and a footman said,—

"MR. DELAMERE."

(To be continued.)